

# PLUCK AND LUCK

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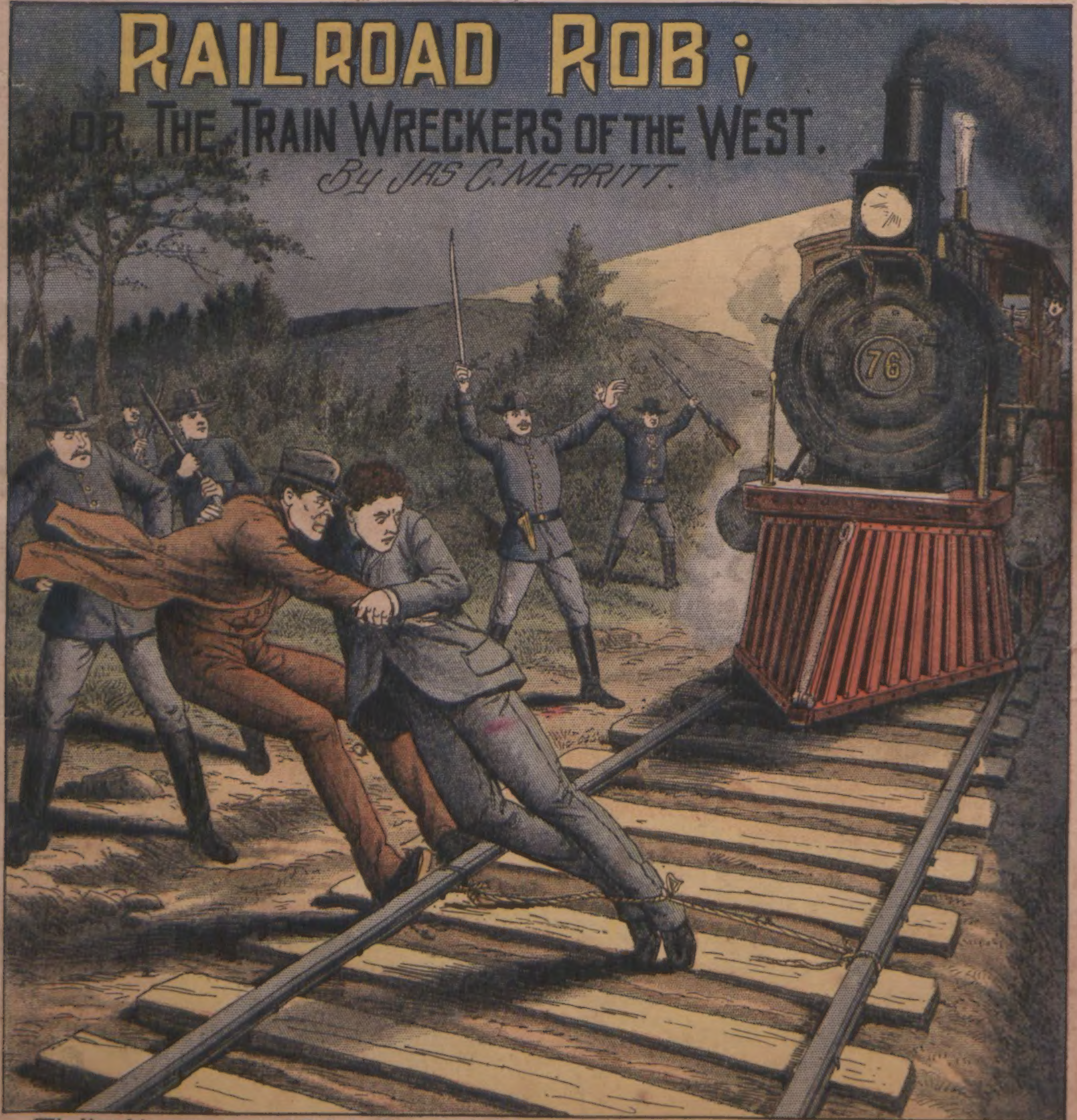
NEW YORK, MAY 3, 1905.

Price 5 Cents.

## RAILROAD ROB;

OR, THE TRAIN WRECKERS OF THE WEST.

By JAS C. MERRITT.



Winding his arms around Rob, he braced his feet against the outside of the rail, and with the giant strength born of desperation tried to pull the helpless boy off the track. But the rawhide held fast.



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## RAILROAD ROB

OR,

### The Train Wreckers of the West.

By JAS. C. MERRITT.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### HOW RAILROAD ROB GOT HIS NAME, AND LOST HIS FATHER.

"She's a regular old coffin on wheels, that's what she is," said Andrew Daley.

At large railroad stations where many trains are made up and dispatched, yardsmen are employed.

With a switching engine—the engineer and fireman of which are under his orders—the yardsman collects together the cars suitable for dispatching on the train he is making up.

The duties of the yardsman are not only arduous, but very dangerous; many are killed by being run over when not aware of an approaching engine, or caught by the foot between the rails of a switch and held until knocked down and run over, and by being crushed between the cars; for in the matter of coupling cars, yardsmen run even greater risks than freight brakemen.

At the time the first of the incidents I am about to relate occurred, the engine used for switching at the Jersey City terminus of a railroad which shall be nameless, was the "Snorter," an old locomotive which had long since been pronounced unfit to send out on the line.

It was the 14th day of August, in the year 1870. From early dawn the "Snorter" had been kept on the move, collecting the cars which were scattered wide over the depot yard, and "kicking" them on to the side-tracks where the different trains were made up.

About a quarter to twelve o'clock, as there was no work which it was necessary to do at once, the yardsman went to his dinner.

Andrew Daley, the fireman, had brought his dinner with him, and as he seated himself on the edge of a platform to eat it, he shook his fist at "Snorter," which was standing on a side track close at hand, and said:

"She's a regular old coffin on wheels, that's what she is."

"Don't abuse the old girl, Andy," said David Benson, the engineer, a good-looking, white-headed old man, who was standing by the engine, looking up the track, as if he expected someone.

"I'd like to know why I shouldn't abuse her."

"What good will it do?"

"I don't know as it will do any good, but I'd as well say a thing as to have it on my mind. It's a sin and a shame to make men run an engine that's sure to send them to kingdom come sooner or later."

"Don't worry."

"How can I help it? Firing on the Snorter is enough to worry an angel to death."

"What's wrong now? You seem to be blowing off more than usual to-day."

"Wrong? Everything about the Snorter is wrong. Her pump leaks, she won't make steam, her buffer beam is shaky, the cover of her right-hand steam-chest is loose, she rattles like a bag of scrap-iron, she's——"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Benson, interrupting the fireman, who was not by any means describing for the first time the dilapidated condition of the Snorter.

"I'll quit her just as soon as I can get another job, that's what I'll do," replied Daley.

"I've heard you say that nearly every day for the last six months."

"I know you have, and I mean it every time, but I haven't found the other job yet."

"And you won't, I guess."

"I hope I will, anyhow. If you'd say the word we could quit her right away. The superintendent would be glad enough to have you take an engine on the road, and if you went, of course I'd go with you."

"No; I'm too old to stand the exposure and loss of sleep on the road, and I want to be with my boy as much as possible."

"Rob is almost a man now."

"Yes, he is eighteen; he will quit school this year."

"He will make an A1 railroad man."

"I hope so."

"Bless you, he takes to it naturally, and what he don't know about an engine already is not worth knowing."

"He is pretty well posted for a boy."

"Well posted? I should say so; he can run an engine better than one-half of the engineers on the road, and I'm not afraid to bet that he can draw the working plan of a locomotive out and out, and see that it is set up properly afterwards."



"He spends most of his leisure time in the shop or about the depot yard."

"Yes, and he has done so ever since he was able to toddle about; and nobody ever thought he was in the way, for he was always ready and willing to go on an errand, or to take hold and work, just as if he was paid for it."

"I'm glad that he is industrious, and likes the kind of work I intend to put him at."

"There's not a lazy bone in his body, and he would rather be on an engine than anywhere else. Why, before he was ten years old the men in the shop began to call him Railroad Rob, and they've kept it up since. Blamed if I don't think some of the new hands think that's his real name."

"Here he comes now; mind you don't say anything out of the way about the Snorter while he is here. It will just make him feel uneasy, and do no good."

"Mum's the word, then, but you can bet your head he knows all about the Snorter, as well as we do."

The next minute Robert Benson, or Railroad Rob, as he was usually called, a fine manly youth, with a shrewd but open countenance, and well developed, compactly built figure which indicated both strength and activity, approached, and after exchanging salutations with the two men, placed a tin bucket on the side of the platform, and said:

"Here's your dinner, father, all piping hot."

The elder Benson had not broken his fast since early in the morning, so he lost no time, but at once commenced to put the contents of the tin bucket where it would do the most good.

While he was thus engaged Rob jumped on the Snorter, examined the steam gauge, ascertained how much water there was in the boiler, put some fuel into the fire-box, oiled the engine wherever it needed it, and in short, did everything that could be done under the circumstances, to put her in the best possible condition for immediate use.

Soon as they finished their dinners, the two men lit their pipes, and Rob, after chatting with them a few minutes, seized the now empty tin pail, and left, saying:

"I must be off, or I will be late for school."

"It's about time for us to be moving, too," replied his father, "for here comes the yardsman now."

Rob had not gone more than three hundred yards, when he was startled by a dull, heavy explosion, which made the earth tremble.

Wheeling around, he cast a quick, eager look toward where he left the engine.

The Snorter had disappeared, and a dense cloud of steam hung over the spot where she had last stood.

With his heart thumping against his ribs like a trip-hammer, Rob rushed back to the spot.

A single glance showed what had happened.

The boiler of the Snorter had burst, blowing the engine into a thousand pieces.

Daley and the yardsman were killed outright, but David Benson, though horribly mangled, was still alive.

As Rob, in speechless agony, knelt by his father's side, the old man recognized him, and in a voice scarcely audible, gasped out:

"It's all over with me, my boy. Always do your duty, if you have to die at your post."

As the last word was uttered, the flickering lamp of life went out, and the heart of David Benson was stilled forever.

## CHAPTER II.

### ALL ABOARD FOR THE WEST.

Some years previous to the occurrences mentioned in the preceding chapter, Railroad Rob lost his mother, and, as he had neither brother nor sister, the death of his father

left him alone in the world. Therefore he was unfortunate.

In fact, he did not know whether he had a blood relation on the face of the earth, though he had sometimes heard his father speak of having a younger brother out West, who was supposed to be engaged in mining, though nothing had been heard of him for a long time, and it was uncertain whether he was still alive.

The day after David Benson was buried, Mr. Blank, the general superintendent of the road, sent for Rob, and when he entered the office, said:

"I'm sorry for your loss, my boy. Your father was one of our best men, and I sent for you to offer you a place in the shop, or on the road—whichever you prefer."

"I'll never do a lick of work on your road," replied Rob, curtly.

"Why?" asked the superintendent, who was astonished at Rob's answer.

"Because you think more about keeping down expenses than you do about the lives of the men who work for you."

"That is a very grave charge you are making," said Mr. Blank, flushing up.

"It's true, nevertheless," answered Bob, stoutly. "If you had furnished the proper kind of switching-engine for the yard, instead of that old worn-out rattle-trap, my father, Andy Daley, and the yardsman would have all been alive and well now."

"There—there, that will do," ejaculated Mr. Blank, who was not a bad man naturally, though in his constant struggle to keep the expenses down, and the earnings up, so as to obtain a net revenue from the road, he was in a great measure careless about the lives and limbs of employees. "Someone has been poisoning your mind about me; however, I'll not get angry with you, but will help you if I can."

"I'm going away from here," replied Bob, "and I don't want any help."

"Well," persisted Mr. Blank, "I can furnish you with a pass to any point you wish to go to, even if it is to California, and will give you a letter of recommendation which may be of service to you."

Now, Bob had been among railroad men too much not to have imbibed a certain reverence for the general superintendent, and the words of Mr. Blank were kind; but Rob's heart grew stern within him when he thought of his father, whom he firmly believed came to his death through the culpable, nay, criminal policy of the railroad company, and he said, firmly:

"I dare say you mean kindly, Mr. Blank, but I will not accept any favor from you or your company, and feeling as I do, I cannot even thank you. Good-day!"

Mr. Blank was accustomed to be addressed in the language of adulation, and the stubborn, not to say rude manner in which his offers were refused, not only irritated him, but caused a new idea to pop into his head.

"Stop!" he exclaimed, as Rob was about to leave. "If you are putting on airs because you intend to sue the company for damages, I can tell you right here that the thing won't work; for even if you had a much better cause of action than you have, we would employ the best lawyers that could be had for money, and rather than pay such a demand, would keep the case in court until you died of old age. We always——"

No one interrupted Mr. Blank, but, voluble and self-sufficient as he was, now that he was on his mettle, he involuntarily stopped short in the middle of a sentence when he saw the contemptuous look in Rob's flashing eyes.

Drawing himself up to his full height, Rob looked the superintendent squarely in the face, and said:



"You need have no fear on that score; if the law would give me the whole road, and every rail on the line was a bar of solid gold, it would not bring back my father, and I am not base enough to think of coining his blood into money."

Taken all aback by this answer, the superintendent said nothing, and without another word Rob turned and left the office.

Rob was always a favorite with the men in the yard and shop, but his popularity was very much increased when what occurred in the superintendent's office leaked out through an office-boy.

After paying his father's funeral expenses, Rob found that he had less than a hundred dollars left, and with this he determined to go West, never doubting that he could find work, and having a vague hope that he might meet his uncle.

His preparations were soon completed, and bidding his friends good-by, he went over to New York city, intending to buy an emigrant ticket at Castle Garden, where he knew that he was sure to get it at the lowest rate.

While passing through the lower part of Greenwich street, where the houses are principally used for emigrant and sailors' boarding-houses, his attention was attracted by a crowd of roughs, who were badgering a young Irishman, whose appearance unmistakably indicated that he had recently landed.

As Rob was about passing the group, the roughs began to hustle the young Irishman, who in vain attempted to defend himself with a stick.

Rob's blood boiled at the sight, and without a moment's hesitation he sprang forward, striking right and left with all the nervous force of his muscular arms, sent two of the roughs rolling into the gutter, and placed himself by the side of the young Irishman, who, encouraged by seeing that he had some one to stand by him, moistened his hand, took a fresh grip of his stick, gave it a flourish around his head, and yelled out:

"Whoo! come on now, ye bla'gards."

And come on they did with a vengeance, the two roughs who were knocked down, and four others, who had recoiled a few paces when Rob made his unexpected onset.

The fight straightway became hot and furious.

Rob and the young Irishman fought like heroes, the former with his fists and the latter with his stick, but they were outnumbered, and soon found that their position was desperate, for not a soul in the crowd which speedily gathered around them offered to interfere.

Fiercely assailed on all sides, and half stunned by the blows showered on them, Rob and the young fellow he had succored were nearly overpowered, when there was a cry of: "Ware, coppers—look out, policemen!" and the roughs at once took to their heels.

Motioning to the young Irishman to follow him, Rob forced his way through the crowd, hurried away, and thus escaped from being arrested.

The next moment the policeman who had, as usual, kept at a safe distance while the fight was going on, came upon the scene, grabbed a drunken man who had been impartially urging the combatants to go in and win, clubbed him until he could not see, and dragged him off to the station-house.

Rob and his companion, neither of whom were seriously injured, scarcely exchanged a word until they reached the Battery Park, when the latter, a droll-looking, round-faced young fellow, about the same age as Rob, said:

"And would ye moind tellin' yer name? for sure as I'm Larry Dolan, all the way from Listowell, county Kerry, I'll niver forget the good turn you done me to-day, and there's my hand on it."

Rob gave the desired information, shook the proffered hand and asked:

"When did you land?"

"Sure, it was last ev'nin', an' I wor only out ov her castle in a garden for a mouthful of fresh air, whin thim bla'gards comminced ther throuble widout any rayson at all."

"Oh, they began to hustle you so that they could pick your pockets."

"Howly Bridget!" exclaimed Larry, bursting out laughing, "me money's all under ther bottom ov me fut in me sock, and there was niver a cint in me pockets, barrin' a tin-pinny bit that I'd already spint for a dhrink ov whisky."

"Are you going to stop in New York?" asked Rob, who could not help smiling at the quaint way in which Larry expressed himself.

"Sure, I'm going to me brother Mike out West. He sing for me."

"Ah, indeed! I'm going out West myself this morning."

"Hurroo! thin we'll travil together if ye say so."

"Certainly, with pleasure. How far are you going?"

"Till I come to the place."

"What place?"

"Where Mike is."

"What is the name of the place?"

"I don't know rightly, for it's the devil's own fist Mike writes; you can look at his letther yerself."

But when Larry searched his pockets for the letter, it was not to be found.

"Sure, I must have lost it in her foight," he said. "It wor in an old pocketbook."

"Then some of the roughs got it," replied Bob.

"Bejabbers, it'll be no use to thim at all; but niver moind, I remember that Mike said he lived close to the railroad to Californy."

"If that's all you know, I'm afraid you will have a hard job finding your brother."

"Go 'long wid you now; the counthry ain't so big as that anyhow."

When Rob explained the extent of the West, and mentioned the various railroads, Larry was dumfounded.

"An' what will I be afther doin', thin?" he asked at length.

"Well," replied Rob, "I'm going straight to Chicago, and you had better go with me; you may hear something of your brother, and in any event, we had as well stick together until something turns up."

"I'll go wid you to ther ind of ther worruld."

Having stood by each other in a fight, and certain points of resemblance in their situations drawing the two boys toward each other, by the time they took a train for the West that evening they knew each other's history, and felt that henceforth they were friends.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A BLOODY SCENE.

One month after leaving New York, Rob and Larry were in Cheyenne City, after having stopped for a few days in Chicago, Clinton, and Omaha.

Larry had not yet heard anything of his brother Mike, nor had Rob succeeded in getting any work which he cared to do.

The boys had now spent nearly all of their money, and on finding that nothing could be accomplished in Cheyenne, they stored their trunks and started off on a kind of "go-as-you-please" walking match along the Union Pacific railroad, each carrying a small package of clothes and provisions strapped on his back.

At first constant walking made them quite sore, but that



soon wore off, and for over a week the weather was so fine that they did not spend a cent for lodgings, but slept like tops, under the sheds at stations, or on the grass near the track, wherever night overtook them.

On the tenth day, however, the weather changed, and in the afternoon became so threatening that the boys eagerly looked for some place of shelter.

But not a house was in sight, and on either hand, extending as far as the eye could reach, was an almost treeless plain.

So the boys hurried onward toward some hills, which had been in sight since early in the morning.

But owing to the extreme clearness of the atmosphere on the plains, objects are seen very plainly at immense distances, and the boys did not reach the foot of the hills until nearly sundown.

Dark, murky clouds were racing athwart the sky, and deep-toned thunder muttered overhead.

There was no sign of a human habitation, and the boys anxiously scanned the hillside, in hope of discovering some overhanging rock under which they could shelter themselves from the impending tempest.

Suddenly the sharp, ringing report of a shot came borne upon the rising wind, instantly followed by another and another, accompanied by the most piercing screams.

Again and again those fearful cries rang through the air, curdling the blood in the veins of Rob and Larry, and causing their hair to stand on end.

Mute and paralyzed, the boys stood for a brief space gazing into each other's blanched faces, with wide staring eyes.

"Injuns!" gasped Larry.

"It is a woman," exclaimed Rob, and as if his words broke the spell that bound them, the two boys darted off toward the spot from whence the sounds proceeded.

Rob carried an old single-barrelled pistol, but Larry's only weapon was his stick; yet in the excitement of the moment, neither of the boys gave a thought to the indifferent manner in which they were armed, or stopped to speculate about the peril to which they might expose themselves by advancing.

Speeding along for about a hundred yards, the boys came to the entrance of a narrow valley, which lay between the hills on the left of the railroad.

The spectacle that met their eyes was so singular and terrible that its horror were sufficient to have struck a chill to the hearts of those more used than Rob and Larry had been to scenes of violence.

Upon the ground in front of a small house lay two men and a fair-haired boy of about sixteen, who had evidently been recently slain, the former by wounds in the body, the latter by a bullet which had shattered his head almost to atoms.

A little way to one side of the bodies a beautiful girl was struggling to escape from the rough grasp of a dark-browed ruffian, and uttering the same wild shrieks which caught the attention of the boys while at a distance.

It must not be supposed that the boys noticed all which I have mentioned in the fearful excitement of the first moment.

Their first glance was riveted on three men engaged in mortal conflict.

They were all armed with bowie-knives, and one of them—the eldest, a gray-haired but vigorous man—with his back against the side of the house, was defending himself against the other two.

Never did more deadly hate glare from the eyes of human beings—such utter contempt of life—such desperate determination to kill—as manifested themselves in every look and motion of the combatants.

The knives of all were already dimmed with blood, but not enough had been shed to impair their vigor or quench their ferocity.

The struggle, however, was too unequal to last long, and even as Rob and Larry rushed forward to succor the gray-haired man, he received a wound which caused him to fall senseless to the earth.

Warned by the shout of the man holding the girl, the two ruffians, who were about to complete their bloody work, wheeled around, and, on seeing Rob and Larry—who were now only a few yards distant—rushed upon them with uplifted knives.

Bang! went Rob's old pistol, and one of the villains fell dead with a bullet through his heart.

Crack! Larry's stick came down upon the head of the other, and he rolled on the ground senseless as a log.

On seeing the fate of his comrades, the ruffian with the girl endeavored to reach a horse—five of which, all saddled and bridled, were unconcernedly grazing near at hand—and carry her off.

But the boys were too nimble for him, and finding that he was about to be overtaken, the villain released the girl, leaped on the first horse he came to, dashed away, and soon disappeared.

Without appearing to pay any attention to Rob and Larry, the girl, who was just budding into womanhood, flew to the dead boy, twined her arms around him, and pressed kiss after kiss upon his pallid lips; then tottering toward the house, she knelt by the side of the gray-haired man, gazed a moment in his face, and seeing no indication of life, uttered a heart-broken moan, and swooned away upon his body.

Stepping to the door of the house, which was not more than two yards distant, Rob knocked and called out. There was no response, so he entered the door, which stood open, and quickly passed through the large front room and two small ones to the rear—which constituted the entire dwelling—but found no living thing, not even a cat, in the place.

Rob and Larry then carried the girl, whose hair was stained and dress bedabbled with blood, into the house; also the gray-haired man, who was found to be still breathing.

Placing the insensible man and girl upon two low couches in the front room, the boys first bound up the wounds of the former, and then tried to resuscitate them.

After persevering for some time without success, Rob and Larry, apprehending that their well-meant but clumsy efforts might be productive of more harm than good, desisted.

It was now nearly dark, and the sigh of the wind, and the muttering of the gathering tempest, were the only sounds that were heard.

The strong feeling of excitement which Rob and Larry experienced in the moment of action when confronted by visible danger, had passed away, the tension of the nerves relaxed, the horrors which surrounded them filled them with indefinable dread, and they knew not what to do.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A WILD RIDE.

The truest kind of bravery is that of men who fully appreciate danger, yet meet it without shrinking.

Therefore, it is in no wise discreditable to Rob and Larry, that, situated as they were, they felt fear, since neither of them, for an instant, thought of securing their own safety by abandoning the helpless man and girl, who were so strangely thrown upon their care.

"I'll tell you what it is, Larry," said Rob, when they began to discuss the situation, "we must have help, and right away



at that, or the man and girl may both die, and besides, the rascal who got away may be back with others at any time."

"An' why can't yer be afther ridin' one of ther horses ter ther next station?" asked Larry.

"That is just what I want you to do, for the one who remains here will be exposed to the most danger."

"Niver mind ther danger," stoutly replied Larry. "I'll die whin me time comes, an' I hope it will be whin I'm doin' my duty; an' you ought ter go, for ther rayson that ye undherstand ther counthry betther nor I."

"Very good, then; I'd better start at once."

"All roight; but we'd betther pick up some posthols an' things, an' say about ther bla'gard I rowled over wid me sthick first."

This was a lucky thought, for the ruffian had begun to recover his senses; but another slight tap from Larry's stick induced him to remain quiet while he was being firmly bound hand and foot.

The knives, pistols, and a rifle belonging to the dead and wounded were then carried into the house, and the firearms reloaded.

As soon as this was done, Rob buckled two pistols and a knife around his waist, put on a pair of spurs, and bidding Larry keep on the alert, went out, mounted the best of the horses—a splendid-looking beast—and galloped off down the railroad, for there was not a sign of a dirt-road about the place.

On the left of the road were hills, while on the right there was a plain, more or less broken and cut up by large gullies, which in the deepening gloom seemed to be interminable.

After proceeding about a mile, Rob saw on the plain a body of some twelve horsemen, who, on discovering him, changed their course with the evident intention of intercepting him.

This Rob prevented by quickening the pace of his horse, and passing the point on the road at which they aimed before the men reached it; but they got near enough to hail him, and to this Rob had no objection, for he was in hopes that they might be friendly, but thought it best to be cautious until he had some indication of their quality.

All doubts about the character of the men were quickly dissipated.

"Stop there," one of them yelled, "or I'll put a bullet through you!"

Of course, none but a ruffian would accost a stranger in that manner, so Rob shouted back:

"You go to Hong-Kong!" and gave the rein to his horse.

Sharp and quick rang out the reports of a dozen rifles and pistols, and Rob heard the singing of the leaden missiles around him, but kept on his way unhurt.

Spurring their horses upon the railroad the men gave chase, shouting and swearing, and occasionally firing a shot, in hopes of hitting Rob, or disabling his horse.

The storm had now burst, and almost in an instant it became so dark that Rob could scarcely see his hand before him; but he pressed onward with unabated speed, for amid the roaring of the wind, and the dashing of the rain, he heard the hoof-beats of his pursuers, and knew that they were on his track.

On—on, he sped, trusting entirely to the sagacity of his horse for safety, and, ere long, entered a canyon through which the road ran, where the darkness was so intense that it was almost palpable to the touch.

The uproar of the storm increased until nothing else could be heard, and Rob did not know whether he was still pursued or not; but he let his horse have his head, and the animal kept onward at the same pace.

All at once the darkness seemed to be less intense, and at the same time Rob became aware, from the sound made by his

horse's hoofs, that he was on a bridge; but the spirited steed did not relax his speed.

A minute or so afterward there was a flash of lightning, and Rob saw what nearly made him faint with terror.

Instead of being fully boarded, the bridge only had one wide plank, laid on the cross-ties in the middle of the track, and along this narrow footway the horse was galloping at full speed.

Lucky it was that Rob was so completely paralyzed that he did not attempt to check the horse, for if he had done so, they would no doubt have both been precipitated into the river, which foamed and surged far below.

Almost before Rob could fairly realize his desperate position, he was threatened by another and more terrible danger.

There was a dull, rumbling noise, rapidly increasing, and then, with a headlight of the engine gleaming like a demon's eye in the darkness, and the whistle screeching like forty thousand fiends, a lightning express train, running to make up time, came thundering through the canyon and onto the bridge.

Rob gave himself up for lost, but instinctively strained his eyeballs out of their sockets in attempting to pierce the gloom in front of him, hoping against hope that he might be near the bank of the river.

What occupies minutes in the relation, passed in the space of a single second.

As the engine dashed onto the bridge, there was a vivid flash of lightning, and Rob saw that close in front of him—merciful Heaven—the bridge ceased.

Ere the lurid glare of the lightning faded, one more bound of the horse brought him to the verge of the widening chasm.

In that supreme moment, nerved by desperation, Rob acted with a decision, a readiness of heart and hand which he could not have acquired by hours of deliberation.

Rowell deep he drove his spurs into the side of the horse that had borne him so well, at the same time lifting him with a steady pull on the bit.

Nobly did the brave animal answer to his rider's hand and heel; without a pause, with unblanching eyes, and a snort in which there was more of rage than fear, he took the terrific leap.

## CHAPTER V.

### FRESH PERILS.

As the gallant steed bounded through the air, Rob felt as if he were flying.

It was a tremendous leap, but the good horse cleared the yawning chasm by several feet.

"Who's that?"

"Who are you?"

"Speak quick or I'll fire!" were the almost simultaneous exclamations that saluted Rob's ears as his horse struck the ground, and several dark figures sprang up on either hand and closed around him.

Before Rob was well aware of their intent the grasp of the foremost was on his bridle rein, another seized him by the leg, pistol and guns were leveled at him on all sides, and for an instant it seemed as if his advance was cut off.

It was but for an instant, however; with a motion as quick as it was unexpected, Rob drew a pistol, shot the man who had hold of the bridle dead, hurled the now useless weapon full in the face of the fellow whose grasp was on his leg, felling him to the ground, and striking his horse with the spurs, dashed onward.

And as he did so he heard a deafening crash, and then



screams of terror and pain, which indicated that the train behind him had fallen through the chasm in the bridge.

Startled out of their self-possession by Rob's prompt and vigorous action, the men who had covered him with their guns and pistols fired just as Rob's horse bounded forward, and the bullets pierced the empty air behind his back.

Other shots were fired as Rob darted away, bending low over his horse's neck, and a bullet tore through his clothes, just grazing his side; but the others were not aimed so well, and the brave boy was soon beyond the range of the weapons of his baffled assailants.

Rob now began to congratulate himself upon being in comparative safety; but not more than two hundred yards had vanished beneath the fiery speed at which he continued to ride, when a man sprang up about thirty yards distant, directly in front of him, and leveling a gun at him, cried out:

"Stop there!"

It flashed like lightning through Rob's brain that the man in front of him belonged to the gang at the bridge, and if that was the case, capture he very well knew, after what had transpired, would be followed by a speedy death.

Yet it looked like certain destruction to advance on the man who stood with a gun at his shoulder in front of him.

But Rob had braved too many perils to shrink from an encounter with a single man now, however desperate the chances.

Therefore, instead of obeying the order to stop, Rob drew a pistol and fired, but missed, and then determined to ride his adversary down.

In a half dozen bounds he was close upon the man, who, either through foolhardiness or confidence in his aim, stood his ground without flinching, until the horse's nose almost brushed his shoulder, and then pulled the trigger of his gun, the muzzle of which was within six inches of Rob's breast.

Probably owing to its having been wet by the rain, which was still falling, the gun missed fire; had it gone off Rob would have inevitably been killed.

The instant after the gun snapped the would-be assassin was struck by the broad chest of the horse, and hurled to the ground, and he uttered a wild yell of agony, as the iron hoofs trampled him down.

Scarcely shaken in his saddle by the slight shock caused by the horse coming in contact with the man, Rob dashed onward, warily peering in front, and on either hand.

But after proceeding nearly half a mile without any interruption, he felt that for the time being at least he was safe.

With a sense of personal security, however, came fears for the safety of Larry and his two helpless companions, and horror at the probable fate of the people on the train.

For Rob now felt certain that the men he had encountered were robbers, but very much doubted if he would find enough men at the next station to operate against them successfully; should this be the case, he determined to make his way back to Larry, even if he had to go alone, or perish in the attempt.

While revolving these matters in his mind, the depot at a station loomed up before him, and as he approached it he dimly discerned a number of tents near at hand, which caused him to think that his chances of getting efficient aid were better than he expected.

Almost immediately after discovering the tents, Rob heard the rattle of a gun, as it was brought to a ready, the sharp clicking of a lock, and someone in front of him cried out in a peremptory voice:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"A friend," replied Rob, reining in his horse back so suddenly that it was thrown on its haunches.

"Advance, friend and give the countersign," exclaimed the

sentinel, for it was a United States soldier who had halted Rob.

"I haven't got the countersign," Rob answered.

"Stay where you are, then," ordered the sentinel, who thereupon called out: "Sergeant of the guard, post number three!"

A non-commissioned officer speedily made his appearance, and, at Rob's request, conducted him to the presence of Captain Wickliff, who was in command of the troops—a company of cavalry—then encamped at the station.

Captain Wickliff was found in the office of the depot chatting with two of his lieutenants and the station agent.

"Well, sir, who are you, and where do you come from?" asked the captain, who was a tall, raw-boned, fiery faced man, when Rob, nearly blinded by the glare of the light in the office, was brought before him.

Rob's story was soon told, but he had scarcely concluded, when the station agent, a pert, consequential little fellow, gave a whistle of incredulity and blurted out:

"So you say you rode across that bridge on horseback?"

"Yes, I did," replied Rob, who was nettled by the speaker's manner.

"Well," persisted the agent, in an incredulous tone, "all I've got to say is that I'd like to see the horse you rode."

"He is at the door," answered Rob, who was losing his temper.

"Then I'll go and take a look at him," and thereupon the agent lit a lantern, and went out with the sergeant to where Rob left his horse when he came into the depot.

Then Captain Wickliff and his lieutenants, whose suspicions were aroused by the marvelous nature of Rob's story, and strengthened by the words and manner of the agent, began to closely cross-question our hero.

After a very brief absence, the agent and sergeant came back into the office, and the former drawing the captain to one side, whispered in his ear:

"It is Red Dick's own horse, and as sure as you are born he has sent this boy here to decoy you into an ambush."

"By Jove, I believe you are right," replied the captain, and turning to the sergeant, he said: "Search this boy."

It would have been madness to resist, and Rob was so completely dumfounded at the way in which he was treated that he could not even expostulate, while the sergeant took possession of his weapons and the contents of his pockets.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW ROB CONVINCED THE CAPTAIN.

"Sergeant," commanded the captain, "I am going to look into this thing. Order the men to get ready to march immediately, but don't let the bugler sound 'boots and saddles,' for we had better move as quietly as possible."

In about fifteen minutes after this order was given the company of cavalry, with Captain Wickliff at their head, was on the march toward the bridge.

Rob was carried along, firmly secured to his saddle, while, as a further precaution, a soldier rode on each side, holding the ends of hitching straps which were fastened to the bridle of his horse.

Instead of marching on the railroad, Captain Wickliff advanced through the plain on a line parallel to, but some three hundred yards from the track. This he did to avoid an ambush if there was any, and pickets that might be posted to give notice of his approach.

When the column had advanced nearly two miles the glare of a fire was seen in front.



A halt was at once ordered, and two men were sent forward on foot to reconnoiter.

After what seemed a very long time, the two scouts returned and reported as follows:

"An engine and part of a train have fallen through a break in the bridge. Several cars are still on the bridge, and there is a gang of fellows busy robbing the passengers and plundering the cars."

"You are sure, are you?" asked Captain Wickliff.

"Yes, sir," replied one of the scouts. "We crept up to within fifty yards of the bridge, and saw everything as plain as could be by the light of a big fire."

"Untie that boy," said the captain; "give him back his arms and other property, and bring him here."

Rob was at once released from his bonds, his property restored to him, and he was brought to the captain, who asked:

"What is your name?"

"My name is Robert Benson," replied our hero, "but I am usually called Railroad Rob."

"Well, Railroad Rob, I have both wronged and insulted you by unjust suspicions and harsh treatment, and I am sorry for it."

"Don't mention it, captain. It is all right now, since we are in time to find the robbers."

"Spoken like a man. But this is no time for talking. I shall attack the rascals on foot, and you can remain with the men who take charge of the horses, or go with me, whichever you prefer."

"I'll go with you!"

"As I expected."

With as little noise as possible the company dismounted, a guard was detailed to remain with the horses, and the rest of the men, led by their officers and Rob, crept toward the robbers like tigers stealing on their prey.

When Rob and the soldiers approached the place of the wreck they found the poor, frightened passengers—among whom were a number of women and children—all huddled together, and guarded by a number of fierce-looking men, armed with guns and pistols.

About a dozen of the robbers were endeavoring to get at the safe and other contents of the baggage and express car, while others were robbing the passengers.

The spectacle made the blood boil fiercely in the breasts of Rob and his comrades, and they eagerly panted for the moment when they should burst upon the villains, who little dreamed of the grim death which was creeping closer and closer to them.

Utilizing themselves of the shelter of some rocks, Rob and the soldiers were able, without being discovered, to approach to within a few yards of the robbers, and almost surround them.

The men having first been cautioned in whispers to be careful and not shoot any of the passengers, Captain Wickliff, in a voice of thunder, shouted:

"Fire!"

At the word the eager soldiers started up from behind the rocks as if they had sprung out of the ground, and poured a withering volley among the robbers, killing over a dozen outright, and wounding several others.

"Charge!" and led by Captain Wickliff and Rob, the boys in blue, with flashing sabers, dashed toward the panic-stricken robbers, who waited not for their coming, but fled with feet winged by fear, and owing to the darkness, for the most part escaped.

The joy of the passengers at being rescued I leave to the imagination of my readers.

As soon as Rob could get Captain Wickliff's ear he begged

that some men might be sent with him to succor Larry and his companions.

"Certainly," replied the captain. "Lieutenant Evans, call for a dozen volunteers, and go with Rob at once; he has behaved like a hero, and I wish to aid him in every way I can."

Hastily picking out, as if by chance, so as to offend no one, the number desired, Lieutenant Evans, accompanied by Rob, led them through the cars over the bridge, and struck out at a brisk pace down the railroad, toward the house where Larry was left.

"God grant that we may be in time," said Rob, who felt a presentiment that Larry and those with him were in danger.

But anxious as Rob was, he would have been a thousand times more so if he could have known what was at that time taking place at the house where Larry was.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WHAT HAPPENED AT THE LONE HOUSE.

When Rob left the house by the railroad to go for help it was, as before mentioned, just about dark.

On being left to himself, the first thing Larry did was to close and secure, with strong bars of wood, which he found provided for that purpose, the heavy shutters of the windows, and all of the doors except the one in front of the house.

Then he looked for something to give a light, and in a cupboard discovered a number of dipped tallow candles, one of which he lit and placed on a table in the large room.

For a few minutes he stood in the door and looked out, but he could not keep his eyes off of the dead men and boy who lay weltering in their blood only a few yards distant, and the ghastly sight made him shiver; so he turned back into the house, seated himself facing the entrance, filled his pipe, and began to smoke.

As the time passed he gradually became more and more nervous, until several times he imagined that he heard stealthy footfalls around the house, and fancied the rattling of the blinds was caused by someone trying to open them.

At length a slight rustling suddenly attracted his attention to the couch upon which the girl was lying, and, seizing the candle, he hurried to it.

The girl began to regain her consciousness.

For a moment or two she did not speak, then fixing her eyes, whose bright intelligence was partially obscured, on Larry, she asked:

"Who are you?"

"Me name's Larry Dolan, from Listowell, County Kerry, Oireland," was the reply, "an' I'm a frind."

"No—no!" she cried, sitting up on the side of the couch, throwing back her long silken hair, and pressing her hands to her head, "my friends are dead—all dead!"

"Sure, it isn't so bad as that; ther ould man will be all roight whin Rob comes wid ther dochter."

Larry had little confidence in what he said, but the warm-hearted fellow was anxious to do everything he could to cheer up the poor woe-begone girl.

Aroused by his hopeful words, she glided to the side of the gray-headed man, bent over for a moment or two, and exclaimed:

"His heart beats—thank Heaven he is alive!" and then burst into tears.

Larry let her weep without interruption, until a long-drawn howl, followed by another and another, broke upon his ear, when he started, and said:

"Whist! and what moight that be?"



"They are wolves," replied the girl. "For mercy's sake help me bring my poor murdered brother into the house, or they will tear him to pieces and devour him!"

Of course, Larry assented, and with the assistance of the girl, brought the dead boy into the house and laid him on the couch which his sister had formerly occupied.

"Pat—Pat, come here," almost immediately afterwards cried the bound ruffian.

Larry went out to where he was, and asked:

"Phat's the matther wid ye now?"

"You wouldn't leave a fellow out here to be eaten up by the wolves, would you?"

"Well, I'll save ye from the wolves, but it's a fool I think I'll be makin' of meself, all ther same."

"I'll swear you shall never regret it, Pat, and I'll thank you the longest day of my life."

"Kape yer thanks for thim as wants thim, an' plaze remimber me name's not Pat, but Larry Dolan, from county Kerry, Oireland."

Larry dragged him to the door of the house, but the girl positively refused to allow the man to be brought into the house, and evinced so much excitement at the sight of him that Larry compromised the matter by putting the shivering wretch into an outhouse and fastening it up.

Peeping through the crevices between the logs of which the house was made, a few minutes afterwards, Larry saw several wolves, which snuffed the tainted air, howled and ran to and fro, but hesitated to approach the house, until re-enforced by others, when they made a simultaneous rush upon the corpses, and commenced to tear them to pieces and devour them.

This horrid spectacle, which was alternately seen by vivid flashes of lightning, and then shrouded from view by the darkness—for the storm had now burst forth—made Larry feel faint and sick; but it had a hideous kind of fascination which compelled him, as it were, to look.

The greater part of the bodies had disappeared, when the wolves began to evince signs of uneasiness, and then took to their heels, dragging half-gnawed bones and fragments of flesh with them.

Then the sound of horses rapidly approaching was heard, and a shrill whistle which was answered by the ruffian in the out-house.

A minute later, Larry, by the lightning's glare, saw a group of about a dozen mounted men at the door of the outhouse, and after a short delay steps were heard approaching the dwelling.

Confident that his prisoner had been released, and that the house was about to be attacked, Larry, with pistols and knife in his belt, and a gun in his hand, stationed himself by the door, and in breathless anxiety awaited what was to follow.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LARRY HOLDS THE FORT.

Larry did not have long to wait.

There was a rapping on the door, and a voice which he recognized as that of his late captive, called out:

"Open the door, or we will murder every one of you!"

"Arrah! go 'long wid ye now," replied Larry, though his heart was in his mouth.

"Stop your jawing, you flannel-mouthed Mick, and let us in, or I'll skin you alive."

"Be off wid ye, I tell you, or ye'll be gettin' inter throuble."

"You'd better open this door if you know what is good for you!"

"It's hanged I'll see you first, and thin I won't."

"You won't, eh?"

"No; I'll——"

What further Larry would have said will never be known.

Just at that moment a bright glare was shot into his very eyes, he felt a sharp, quick stroke on his forehead, and uttering a yell of pain and terror, he staggered back and fell, striking against and overturning the table as he did so, and extinguishing the candle which was on it.

One of the ruffians had fired a pistol at him through a crack between the logs of the house.

But Larry was in no condition to realize what had happened; for one brief moment he experienced a feeling of deadly sickness—a swimming of the head, and then everything was blank.

He heard not the shout of triumph with which the ruffians echoed the sound of his fall, or the cry of despair uttered by the girl when he fell.

The bullet aimed at his head, however, merely grazed Larry's temple, without penetrating the skull, and his insensibility was of brief duration.

Faintly, and, as it were in a dream, he heard a hammering on the door; then as his senses grew clearer, the voice of the girl, who had crept close to him, asking:

"Are you alive—are you hurt much?"

"Sure, I'm thinkin' it's not so bad after all," said Larry, sitting up and feeling his head, from which the blood was slowly trickling.

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothin', widout ye'd tie a rag 'round me head."

"Certainly I will," and she got a towel and bound up Larry's head so as to stop the flow of blood.

When the girl finished binding up Larry's head she said:

"Give me a pair of pistols and a knife."

"An' phat will ye do wid thim?" asked Larry, who, though his mind was not yet quite clear, was astonished at the request.

"Help you defend the house, and if that becomes no longer possible, put an end to myself."

Larry gave her two of the six pistols he had sticking in his belt, and told her that she could find several knives on the floor, which were on the table when it was overturned, but said:

"Sure, you don't think of killin' yourself, whatever happens!"

"I do and will," she firmly replied, as she picked up one of the knives, "for I would rather die a thousand deaths than to fall into the hands of those villains alive!"

The words and manner of the girl acted on Larry like an electric shock in a case of stupor, restoring him to full possession of all his faculties, sharpened, indeed, into a greater than the natural coolness.

Telling the girl to keep still, he crept on his hands and knees to the door, upon which the ruffians continued to pound without producing any perceptible effect.

Larry, however, knew that if the blows were continued, the door must yield sooner or later; so placing the muzzle of a rifle to one of the cracks between the logs, he fired point-blank into the group of villains.

At the crack of the gun one of the rascals fell forward on his face without a groan, and the others disappeared instantly.

Larry hastily reloaded the rifle, and stood ready to fire again, but nearly five minutes passed without his seeing or hearing anyone on the outside of the house.

He began to hope that the ruffians had abandoned the attack when there came a furious pounding on the back door, as if a determined attempt was being made to break it open.

This, however, was a ruse to divert attention from the point which was really threatened, and scarcely had Larry crept to



the back part of the house, when the ruffians, with one tremendous blow with a large log of wood, which they used as a battering ram, broke the fastenings of the front door, and sent it flying from its hinges.

Uttering a bloodthirsty shout of triumph, the ruffians poured into the house, but were confronted by Larry, who in less time than it takes to tell it, discharged a rifle and four pistols into the surging throng, making three of them bite the dust, and with a yell of desperation threw himself in their midst, cutting and slashing right and left, with a Bowie knife.

For a few minutes the ruffians, owing to the dim light and the way they were crowded together, were scarcely able to strike at all, for fear of wounding each other; but ere long Larry was felled to the floor by a blow with the butt of a pistol.

When Larry fell his life would not have been worth a moment's purchase, if at that moment the girl had not fired her two pistols at the ruffians, killing one and wounding another.

Startled by this, for the villains supposed that Larry was the only foe they had to contend with, they shrank back, and as they did so there was a ringing cheer, and a rush of many feet toward the house, which caused all of the murderous crew, who were not killed or disabled, to take to their heels and vanish like smoke.

The next moment Rob, with a pistol in one hand and a saber in the other, bounded up to the door, closely followed by Lieutenant Evans and his men, and shouted:

"Hurrah, Larry! am I in time?"

"Ye are in tolme ter save me loife, but I'm kilt entirely and spacheless!" replied Larry.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ROB MAKES A FRIEND, AND FINDS HIMSELF FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH.

Finding that the ruffians had gone, and knowing that it would be useless to pursue them, Rob went into the house and struck a light.

And Lieutenant Evans, soon as he had posted some sentinels to guard against a surprise, joined him with the rest of the men, and proceeded to remove the dead and wounded ruffians to the outhouse.

Notwithstanding Larry's assertion that he was "kilt entirely," he was found to be unhurt, with the exception of a severe, though by no means dangerous contusion on the head, caused by the blow that knocked him down, and the slight wound produced by the pistol-ball.

A sense of security, and seeing Rob return all safe and sound inspired him to such a degree, that for the time at least he nearly forgot his wounds, and gave an account of what had happened.

As for the girl, she had not received a scratch, and her confidence for the opportune arrival of Rob and his companions was not disappointed.

The gray-headed man was still unconscious, but was there any convenient way to move him had he been in a condition to be moved; and the rain was pouring down in torrents, so Lieutenant Evans concluded to take up his quarters in the house, and when morning came send to his captain for instructions.

Rob, though he had a sore through enough to the ear almost to feel that it would be a cruel thing to leave the pain still to spend the night alone with the most able man, and did not feel disposed to sit up with her.

For some time after Rob and the girl had much to say, but

they gradually drifted into a conversation, and finally Rob said:

"I think you ought to communicate with your friends as soon as possible."

"Friends," she replied; "the only friend I have in the world is my father, that poor man who lies on the bed here, and who, I fear, will not live to see the light of another day."

"Have you no relatives or acquaintances?"

"None; and if my father dies, there is no refuge for me but the grave."

The intense sadness of these words, and the hopeless tone in which they were uttered, went straight to Rob's heart.

On the instant he resolved that he would befriend the sorrow-stricken girl to the very best of his ability, and at all hazards.

Rapidly he told her of his past life, of his hopes, fears, and present condition, and in conclusion said:

"You need no longer be friendless if you will let me be your friend."

"You know not what you ask," she answered. "Death and misery have dogged my footsteps from my very cradle, and all of those who befriend me perish."

"Then if you have been thus unfortunate, there is all the more reason why you should let me serve you; and believe me, I will do so faithfully."

As Rob spoke a gleam of hope replaced the dark shadow which rested on the girl's face, and when he ceased speaking, she raised her lustrous eyes confidently to meet his gaze, and placing her little hand in his, said:

"Yes, I will trust you, now and forever; and, believe me, the heart of Lucy Howard will cease to beat ere she proves ungrateful for your noble, generous-hearted conduct."

Rob was about to make a suitable reply, when the whistle of a locomotive was heard.

"There!" he cried; "a train is coming, and if it is not stopped there will be another smash-up at the bridge!" and seizing a flaming brand, he went out on the track and waved it in the air, at the same time walking toward the approaching cars until he passed around a curve near the house, which would have prevented his signal from being seen at any great distance had he remained stationary.

Far away he saw a bright spot that gradually grew larger and larger, and which he knew was the headlight of a locomotive; then he heard a quick, single screech of the whistle, which he was well aware meant "Put on the brakes!"

"It is all right," ejaculated Rob. "The engineer sees me."

"Yes, and I see you, too!" exclaimed a hoarse voice, almost in his ear, and before Rob could make a word of reply for himself, or even cry out, a pair of arms were thrown around him, pinioning his arms to his sides, a handkerchief was crammed into his mouth so that he could not utter a word, and the fire-brand which he carried thrown into a ditch by the roadside, and extinguished.

Then, while he was held with a grasp of iron by one man, the grinning face of the other, whom Rob recognized as the one who had been knocked down by Larry, and tied, was thrust into his face, and the ruffian cried:

"You did not know who I was when you had me tied like a dog. I'm Red Dick; perhaps you have heard of me before, and now I'm going to get even with you."

Being gagged, of course Rob could make no reply, and Red Dick and the other man who was with him:

"Tie him on the track, so that he may be sent up by the train that is coming."

The ruffians pulled on several different ropes, and finally succeeded in tying Rob to the rails, so that his head and arms were held out toward the oncoming train.

"You need not expect to get away," said Red Dick to Rob, as



enough at hand to put a bullet through your head if the train stops before it runs over you."

Red Dick and his two companions then secreted themselves behind some rocks a few yards distant.

The way that Red Dick and his men came to encounter Rob may be told in a breath; they were creeping back toward the house to try and regain possession of their horses, which were abandoned during the panic caused by the approach of the soldiers.

Almost immediately after Rob was led to the track he heard the locomotive whistle twice, and that he knew was the signal to take off the brakes.

"As the light I had was put out," thought Rob, "the engineer has concluded that it was not a danger signal, and is coming as he was before he saw it."

But whether the train stopped or not, Rob felt that he was lost.

Louder and louder grew the rush and roar. Rob felt the solid earth tremble as the train dashed toward him, and summoned up his resolution to die like a man.

## CHAPTER X.

### LARRY TO THE RESCUE.

When Red Dick and his companions captured Rob they did not suppose that anyone saw them.

But in this they were mistaken.

One of the sentinels who was posted near the house by Lieutenant Evans, witnessed the seizing of Rob, but owing to the almost immediate extinguishing of the flaming firebrand by the ruffians, saw nothing more.

But the sentinel at once concluded that something was wrong, and he at once reported the matter to the lieutenant.

On receiving this intelligence, and being informed by Lucy that Rob had left the house to stop an approaching train, Lieutenant Evans awakened his men, who had laid down for undressing, and accompanied by Larry, who, notwithstanding his bruises, would not remain behind, led all who were left to guard the house, at double-quick time toward the spot indicated by the sentinel.

What must be borne in mind, was done at the very time when the train was passing the spot where Rob was.

It happened that in a few seconds after Rob was tied to the rails, his friends were near at hand.

At the first sight of the train, Lieutenant Evans, who was at the head of the party, saw that the train was passing the spot where Rob was, and he at once ordered the train to stop.

The train stopped, and the engine was reversed. The soldiers, who were at the head of the party, saw that the train was passing the spot where Rob was, and they at once ordered the train to stop.

Larry, with the lieutenant and soldiers, were only a short distance away, when they saw the train stop.

The train stopped, and the engine was reversed. The soldiers, who were at the head of the party, saw that the train was passing the spot where Rob was, and they at once ordered the train to stop.

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out:

"Here's a dead mon!" and immediately afterward exclaimed: "Oh, murther—murther, it's Rob!"

These exclamations arrested the steps of Lieutenant Evans and his men, who had already begun to realize the absurdity of attempting to catch the ruffians in the dark, and they gathered around Larry and Rob.

"Perhaps he is not dead," said the lieutenant.

"Sure he must be," replied Larry, "or he'd spake to me."

"Why, he is gagged! Take the gag out; but you'd better lift him off of the track first, for the cars will soon be here."

"Bejabbers, he's tied ter ther rails!" cried Larry, when he attempted to move Rob.

"So he is," said the lieutenant, falling on his knees by Rob's side, "and with a rawhide lasso, at that, I can tell by feeling."

"Sure I can't unfasten it, at all—at all."

"No, his Satanic Majesty himself couldn't untie a tight-drawn knot in a rawhide lasso when it is wet like this is. Out with your knives, men, and cut the infernal thing, we have no time to spare."

And the lieutenant, who was at the head of the party, saw that the train was passing the spot where Rob was, and he at once ordered the train to stop. The train stopped, and the engine was reversed. The soldiers, who were at the head of the party, saw that the train was passing the spot where Rob was, and they at once ordered the train to stop.

The soldiers fully appreciated the danger, and with Larry and the lieutenant they hacked, and slashed away with a will at Rob's bonds.

But work as they would, their progress was slow, for the tough raw-hide was hard to cut, and the ruffian who bound Rob on the track had passed the lasso around him and the rails many times, and knotted it in every conceivable way.

Soon as the headlight of the locomotive made Rob and his friends visible, the engineer began to sound the whistle, and ring the bell incessantly to warn them off the track.

Nearer and nearer came the cars.

Rob's legs were at length at liberty, but the coils of the lasso around his neck and body still held him fast to the other rail.

It seemed impossible to release him in time, and brave as they were, Lieutenant Evans and the soldiers, appalled by the danger to which they were exposing themselves, sprang off the track.

But Larry stuck to his work.

There was no flinching on his part, no tremor in his brave heart, no nerveless action in his strong arm.

The train was now not more than fifty yards distant, but there was only one turn of the lasso which fastened Rob to the rail, and Larry worked desperately to sever it.

The tough rawhide was partly cut in two, when Larry unfortunately bore too hard on his knife, and the blade snapped off. It seemed to sound the last knell of hope.

There was no time to get another knife, nor even to open another blade had there been one in Larry's knife; in fact, there did not seem to be time to do anything that could possibly prevent Rob from being crushed by the train, which was almost upon him.

But even in that moment of tremendous peril, the heart of the brave Irish lad did not despair.

Winding his arms around Rob, he threw his body against the outside of the rail, and with the force of his arms he managed to pull the lasso off the rail.

The train stopped, and the engine was reversed.



Larry felt the hot breath of the iron horse in his very face, and then put every ounce of strength he had in one tremendous effort, well knowing that if it failed he and Rob would be dashed and crushed to pieces the next instant.

But it did not fail.

Beneath that tremendous strain the partly severed lasso broke, and the boys slid, as it were, out of the very jaws of death which seemed to be about to close on them.

But it was a close shave, for, as Larry fell at full length on his back, dragging Rob with him, the wheels of the engine grazed against the feet of the latter.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ROB AND LARRY ARE ABOUT TO GET INTO BUSINESS.

Long and long were the cheers with which the soldiers, the engineer, and the passengers who had stuck their heads out of the car windows, greeted Larry's heroic exploit.

But there was no response from the boys, and when Lieutenant Evans and his men rushed forward to congratulate them, they found that Larry had fainted dead away; and as for Rob, he was still gagged; for in their anxiety to get him off the train no one had thought of taking the handkerchief out of his mouth, and his hands were confined by part of the lasso so that he could not do it himself.

This, however, was quickly remedied, and as soon as he was relieved of his bonds and the gag, Lieutenant Evans asked:

"Are you hurt?"

"No," replied Rob.

"How do you feel?"

"Thankful and shaky," and without another word Rob went to work chafing Larry's forehead and hands, to resuscitate him.

Lieutenant Evans had a flask of brandy with him, and after a few drops had been poured down Larry's throat, and some water from one of the soldiers' canteens sprinkled in his face, he gasped, stared around him blankly, and asked, in a weak voice:

"Where's Rob?"

"Here I am," replied Rob, pressing his hand.

"An' ye are not dead after all?"

"No, I'm all right; but I don't know how to thank you for saving my life."

"By not spakin' av it; sure, ye'd ha' done the same for me."

By this time the train was brought to a stand, and the conductor jumped off and came back to where the boys and soldiers were.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"The trouble is," said Rob, "that the boys have been cut off by the bridge, and a train of soldiers is coming to help them."

"The mischief you say. But what was the trouble here?"

"Well, when this young man," pointing to Rob, "was trying to stop your train, some villains, probably belonging to the same gang that cut the bridge, seized him, and tied him on the engine."

"And then," said the conductor, "you came along and saved him?"

"Yes, sir," replied Rob, "and Larry, too. The boys were trying to stop the train, and we came along and saved them."

"And then," said the conductor, "you came along and saved them?"

Larry felt the hot breath of the iron horse in his very face, and then put every ounce of strength he had in one tremendous effort, well knowing that if it failed he and Rob would be dashed and crushed to pieces the next instant.

"Young men," said the superintendent, "you have done the Union Pacific Railroad Company a great service, and I'll see that you are well rewarded."

"We don't want any reward," replied Rob, "for we have done nothing but our duty."

"You're roight," assented Larry.

"Well," answered the superintendent, "we won't quarrel about that now, but you may be sure I'll not forget it."

"We are very much obliged to you for your kind intentions," said Rob, "though we don't want anything for what we have done."

"What kind of business are you engaged in?"

"We are not in any business; we have been trying to get work on some railroad."

"Then you need not waste any more time in trying; I'll engage both of you at once. You are just the kind of men we want on this road."

"Thank you, sir; what kind of work will you want us to do?"

"You shall have the very best positions you are capable of filling, and if I am not very much mistaken you will both advance yourselves rapidly."

"We will do our best."

"Then you will be sure to succeed. But I have no time to talk about the matter now, for I am going down to the bridge on the engine, and will leave the rest of the train here until I determine what to do, for we may have to carry the passengers back to Como station, and if so, I wish to avoid pushing the cars a yard more than is absolutely necessary, for I consider it a very dangerous practice."

"I'd like to have Lucy Howard and her father, if he can be moved, go to a place of safety on this train."

"Certainly; put them on board by all means if you can; but in any event, do not fail to inquire for me when the engine returns; if I do not come back on it, I will send you word where to find me."

Then, after directing the conductor to assist in moving Mr. Howard to the train, and to provide him and his daughter with a state-room in the sleeping car, Mr. Fillmore got on the locomotive and started to the bridge.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DUST TO DUST.

Soon as the superintendent left Rob inquired for a doctor, and finding a surgeon of the United States army named Blair on the train, took him to the house to see Mr. Howard, who was found in a conscious condition, though he was so weak that he could scarcely speak above a whisper. Surgeon Blair examined his wounds, readjusted the bandages, and said that he hoped that he would recover.

"But he will have to be moved," whispered Rob.

"Where to?" asked the surgeon, in the same tone.

"I don't know; but if he remains here after the soldiers leave he will be murdered."

"Then he is in a desperate condition indeed, for I think he will die if he is moved any considerable distance."

Though the conversation was carried on in whispers, the keen ears of Lucy Howard, and clinging to the surgeon's arm, she implored him to save her father's life.

"I will do my best," said the surgeon, "but I cannot guarantee his life."







sary to explain the origin of Red Dick's band, and to show what desperate villains it was composed of.

At the different places along the route, many of which sprang into existence and then disappeared as the road advanced, the lowest villains unhung congregated from all parts. Day and night at the gambling table and the low dance house they held high carnival, and every successive day saw some poor wretch murdered in rage or spite.

There never was seen upon the face of the earth a more motley crew of desperadoes, outcasts, and reckless speculators than followed the road's progress, and rioted in the license and coarseness of unorganized society.

Where these people came from originally, and where they were to go when the road was finished, and their occupation was over, were puzzles too intricate to be solved.

The reign of the roughs, though terrible while it lasted, was of brief duration.

As the road advanced, law-abiding citizens organized themselves into vigilance committees, which drove such of the desperadoes as were not lurking or shot stealthily westward, and when the road was completed the villains found it to their advantage to skip.

Some returned to the cities from whose slums they had emerged, while others, more desperate or daring, joined themselves together in gangs for mutual protection, and plundered openly, or by stealth, as opportunity offered.

Of the latter class were the band of robbers and train-wreckers commanded by Red Dick.

When they fled from the soldiers who were with Larry when he discovered Rob tied on the railroad track, Red Dick and his two companions went toward a stronghold of the band which was about ten miles distant.

"Those bluecoats came by the bridge," said Red Dick, as soon as he thought it was safe to speak.

"Then they must have fell afoul of our fellows who were, no doubt, trying to save whatever was valuable on the cars," replied one of the men.

"Any fool would know that," snapped Red Dick, and his companions made no answer.

Enraged at the loss of his valuable horse, the defeat he had met with at the house by the railroad, and for reasons which will speedily appear, apprehending trouble with the men of his band when he joined them, Red Dick was in no humor for talking.

Consequently there was very little conversation between him and his companions, for they knew the savage temper of their chief too well to irritate him by talking, when he evinced a disposition to be silent.

Pathway there was none, and the route which they traveled was so rough that, though they were evidently familiar with it, they were nearly three hours in reaching the place they aimed at.

It would be impossible to find any situation more terrible and extraordinary than the spot which the train-wreckers had selected for their abiding place.

It was a small valley of an irregular oval shape, some five hundred yards long by three hundred in width, being surrounded on all sides by tremendous precipices, it seemed as if it were placed in the bottom of a huge well.

The descent was over bowlders and jagged rocks, which formed a noise and very unusual sight of steps that followed the swelling of a mountain torrent, which rushed, roaring down the precipice, down into the valley.

This torrent ran down the valley, and then disappeared in a dark, cavernous opening in the rocks.

At the head of the descending stream on the right hand side of the torrent were a sufficient number of rough cabins to accommodate the whole band of train-wreckers.

But for two things the spot would have been an unexceptionable robbers' retreat—horses could not be carried into the valley, and an assailing party, by taking a position that commanded the top of the natural stairway, would leave the occupants of the place no alternative except to be starved out, or fight at a great disadvantage.

Notwithstanding these defects, the place from the time it was first occupied had proved to be a safe asylum for the robbers, and no untoward circumstances had caused them to realize the fact that they had deliberately placed themselves in a position that might, under certain circumstances, prove to be the worst kind of a trap.

The security of the place, however, was almost entirely owing to the difficulty of finding it, and that could scarcely be overrated, as the approach to it for some miles was over bare rocks, where an army might have marched without leaving a trail.

The robbers themselves omitted no precaution to prevent the spot from being discovered, and none of the prisoners who, from time to time, were carried into the valley to act as servants, and for other purposes, were ever allowed to leave it alive.

It might truly have been said of the hapless captives who were taken to the accursed spot, that on entering it they left hope behind, for upon the slightest provocation, and frequently from mere caprice, they were shot, stabbed or thrown into the torrent to be hurled to swift destruction in the hideous abyss which swallowed it up.

On approaching the entrance to the valley, Red Dick imitated the howl of a prairie walf, and on being answered by the hooting of an owl, continued to advance.

A minute or so afterward he and his companions were confronted by a man with a gun in his hand, who stepped from a place of concealment among the rocks, and said:

"So you didn't go under, captain?"

"No," replied Red Dick. "Have the men got back from the bridge?"

"Some of them."

"How did things work?"

"Bad enough," and then lowering his voice to a whisper the man continued; "you had better keep your eyes skinned, for the boys are ugly, and no mistake."

"Maybe some of them will be uglier than they are now before they are many hours older."

And with that Red Dick satisfied himself that his knife and pistols were loose in their scabbards, and followed by his two comrades, descended into the valley.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A PROSPECT OF FIGHT.

When Red Dick arrived in the valley, he found some forty or fifty of the band of train-wreckers reclining on the ground, or standing around a large fire, burning from a stump, a massive looking fellow, armed to the teeth, who was perched upon a stone, and spoke with an assumption of authority.

The listeners were so much absorbed in what was being said that they did not notice the approach of their leader, but the speaker did, and exclaiming in a suppressed voice: "There he is now!" stopped his harangue so abruptly that Red Dick felt certain that he had been the subject of the oration.

Several of the robbers had bandages on their heads or limbs, showing that they had not escaped scoldings from the commander at the bridge.



There was a dogged, sullen look on the faces of most of the gang, and the muttered exclamations and fierce glances with which they greeted Red Dick boded him no good, and could scarcely have escaped the notice of the dullest.

But Red Dick was a wily, as well as a desperate, villain; affecting not to notice the manner in which he was received, he strode into the midst of the gang, and in a voice which, if it was not cheery, had no tremor in it, said:

"Well, boys, how did you come out at the bridge?"

"There was blazes to pay, and no pitch hot," growled the late orator, who, owing to an obliquity in his vision, was known by the pseudonym of Cross-eyed Bill.

"What happened?"

"Well, the train was smashed up just about as we wanted it, except that the express car fell through the break in the bridge, so it was hard to get at."

"Well?"

"While we were trying to get at the express safe, and going through the passengers and their baggage, a company of soldiers slipped up and let drive among us."

"Was there much of a fight?"

"Not on our side; they charged us, and those that did not light out mighty quick were natbed, or died with their boots on."

"How many men did you lose?"

"There are twenty-four missing, not counting those that went with you and after you."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"You ought to have thought of that before you brought it about."

"Me, how did I bring it about?"

"That you know best yourself."

"I'll be hanged if I do."

"Well, I'd just like to ask you a question or two."

"Blaze away, then," replied Red Dick, who was furious with rage, but restrained himself with a powerful effort.

"You ordered that the bridge should be cut, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And said that you would be there before the time for the train?"

"Yes."

"You did not show yourself?"

"No."

"But a perfect devil came galloping over the bridge, jumped his horse across the break, killed one man, knocked down another, and rode over a third, crushing in his ribs, and no doubt brought the soldiers down on us."

"You don't think I sent the fellow after the soldiers, do you?"

"He was riding your horse, and I don't think he could have done it on any other."

"I got into a small fight, was knocked on the head and captured, that was how he came to get my horse."

"That's all right, but how did you get a horse?"

"I got a horse to ride a party and when I thought it could be done, I did it."

"That's all right, but how did you get a horse to ride a party and when I thought it could be done, I did it?"

"I got a horse to ride a party and when I thought it could be done, I did it."

"That's all right."

"I got a horse to ride a party and when I thought it could be done, I did it."

"That's all right, but how did you get a horse to ride a party and when I thought it could be done, I did it?"

"That's all right."

"That a man who neglects the interests of the band to attend to his own is not fit to be its captain."

There was an undisguised murmur of assent to this, and Red Dick saw that his position, nay his life itself, might be lost if he did not do something to turn the tide which was setting against him.

Dropping the conciliatory manner which he had maintained during the foregoing conversation, he sternly eyed Cross-eyed Bill, and said:

"You seem to doubt my statement."

"I do," replied Cross-eyed Bill.

"Or in other words, you think I lie."

"I have not said so, but you can put it that way if you like."

"Then if you are not a coward, as well as a sneaking slanderer, you will give me satisfaction, for you have offered me an insult, which nothing but your heart's blood can wipe out."

There was perhaps not a man present who did not expect there would instantly be a rough and tumble fight, which would be fought to the bitter end, and the crowd hastily drew back to avoid being shot or cut by accident, and left Red Dick and Cross-eyed Bill confronting each other.

For an instant or two the men stood glaring at each other, but Cross-eyed Bill neither spoke nor made any motion to accept the defiance hurled in his face, and the robbers began to murmur with astonishment, for no one believed him to be a coward.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A DUEL BY TORCHLIGHT.

The deadly skill of Red Dick with all kind of weapons, and his unflinching bravery, made him an adversary that any man might well hesitate to encounter in single combat, and besides, the band seemed to be in a humor to deal with him severely, under the impression that he was indirectly, at least, the cause of their late disaster.

Therefore, Cross-eyed Bill, though by no means a coward, was desirous of avoiding a personal difficulty, especially as he expected to become commander of the band, if Red Dick was put out of the way.

"Well," said Red Dick, impatiently, after a few moments had passed, "will you fight or show the white feather?"

"I don't want any fuss with you," replied Cross-eyed Bill, "but when the band is through with you, I am at your service, if you insist upon a fight."

"You can't sneak out of the matter that way; the band can investigate my conduct if they choose to do so, of course; but, in the meantime, there is no reason why we should not settle our little affair; no one will object, I am sure."

And he was right, no one did object, for nothing—not even the prospect of plunder—excited a livelier interest among the lawless band than a combat between two well-matched men.

Cross-eyed Bill, in his eagerness to get rid of Red Dick, had gone further than he intended, but what had passed could not be recalled, and finding that he was in a position where he would have to fight or back out, he determined to do the former.

Having concluded to fight, Red Dick and Cross-eyed Bill each selected a second, and the terms were agreed upon.

There was a great crowd of people gathered around the scene, and the excitement was at its height. The two men stood facing each other, and the crowd held its breath.



after the word was given the men were to be at liberty to advance or retain their positions, as they thought best.

The ground measured, Red Dick and Cross-eyed Bill took their positions, and the pistols, already cocked, were handed to them."

On either side of the space between the two combatants, the other robbers ranged themselves in two lines, looking fierce and eager in the flare of torches which had been hastily made, for in the valley it was yet quite dark, though the crests of the surrounding hills indicated that the dawn was breaking.

There was a slight pause after the men took their positions, and the gang scanned them curiously, but neither of them flinched, though it was a foregone conclusion that one or both of them would be killed, for they were good shots, and each of them had the right to fire six times; bets, however, were freely offered and taken among the robbers that neither of the men would fire more than once.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" asked one of the seconds.

"Ready!" was the response from each of the men.

"Fire!"

The reports of the two pistols were almost simultaneous.

Red Dick's hat, pierced by a bullet, not an inch above his head, flew into the air, but he stood firm.

Cross-eyed Bill, however, was not so fortunate; he leaped spasmodically into the air and fell at full length on his back—dead!

The heavy pistol ball had passed directly through his heart, and he never knew what hurt him, his death was so instantaneous.

"Anybody else got a private grudge against me that they would like to settle?" asked Red Dick, cool as a cucumber.

No one answered, and he continued:

"I never have gone back on you, men, and I never will."

"That's so," assented several of the robbers whose confidence in Red Dick had been only temporarily shaken by the execution of Cross-eyed Bill.

"I will satisfy you all that I am not to blame for not being at the bridge."

"We will take your word for it," exclaimed a number of the men.

"I thank you for your confidence; however, I will explain the matter, anyway. But now we need a little rest. Let two of the men who have remained in the valley during the night go on a scouting expedition toward the bridge, for those infernal soldiers may try to beat up our quarters."

Red Dick then retired to his cabin, and after barring his door, took a stiff drink of whisky, and threw himself, dressed as he was, on a bunk.

"The miserable dogs!" he muttered, before sinking to sleep. "I don't wonder the corporal had his fingers crossed; they would be kicking my carcass and shouting for him; however, I'll stick to them until I get Lucy Howard where I want her, and then I'll be off to the north fork of the Platte River."

Most of the robbers followed the example of Red Dick, and retired to their quarters. The only exception was Cross-eyed Bill's partner, who, having been wounded in the head, lay on the ground, his hands clasped over his eyes, and his face pale as death. He was still alive, but his wounds were mortal.

father, asked what caused the strange sounds in the box which was placed in his charge.

"Papa would be angry with me if I told you," she replied.

"Is there anything in the box that is dangerous?" asked Rob.

"Not to you."

"Why not to me, as well as to anyone else?"

"I must not tell."

"I don't understand how the contents of the box can be harmless to me and dangerous to others."

"I know you cannot understand it, but please don't ask me to explain, for I really ought not to have said a word about the matter."

And with this Rob had to be contented, for he saw that it would only distress Lucy without shaking her resolution, if he endeavored to persuade her to be more explicit.

Rob, therefore, left Lucy with her father, and returned to Larry, who was very much astonished when the above conversation was reported to him.

"Arrah now," he said, "that's square, entirely; but if ther box won't harm you, it will not be afther hurtin' yer friends ayther."

"I hope not," replied Rob.

"You may depind on it, though, for that matther, I'd be wid ye, anyhow, if ye nade help in movin' or guardin' it."

"I know you would, old fellow, but we won't be bothered with it long, for it is only some fifty-six or seven miles to Fort Steele."

When the cars reached the broken bridge, the passengers who were on the wrecked train cheered Rob, and crowded forward to shake hands with him, for they had learned from the soldiers that it was owing to him that they were rescued from the robbers.

While the passengers and their baggage were being transferred to a train on the other side of the river, Mr. Fillmore said to Rob and Larry.

"You had better go on to Fort Steele with Surgeon Blair, to assist him in taking care of Mr. Howard and his daughter."

"When will we see you again?" asked Rob.

"I will be at Fort Steele day after to-morrow."

"I'd like to buy that horse of yours," said Captain Wickliff, whom Rob found taking to Surgeon Blair.

"I don't know that I have a right to claim him," replied Rob.

"Certainly you have; you captured him, and you have a right to do what you please with him."

"Then I'll not part with him if I can help it, for he saved my life."

"You are right; I'll send him up to Fort Steele to you."

"I will only be there a few days."

"No matter," said Surgeon Blair. "I'll take care of the horse for you."

A few minutes afterward the cars started, and in about two hours were at Fort Steele.

Mr. Howard, who had stood the trip much better than could have been expected, was at once carried to the surgeon's quarters, and Rob and Larry were given a room in the same house.

Fort Steele, as its name implies, is a military post. The fort, which occupies a good position between the railroad and the north fork of the Platte River, was established in 1868.

At the time I write of, it was garrisoned by three companies of the 10th Infantry and one company of the 24th Cavalry, and the commanding officer was Lieutenant-Colonel Henry A. Mendenhall, 10th Infantry.

Several of the officers had their wives with them, and so Lucy Howard had what she much needed—the companionship of a woman.

Rob and Larry were placed in the same room with a soldier, and they were very comfortable.







"Are they on the warpath?"

"Some white renegades have been tampering with the tribes about the head waters of the North Platte, and I am inclined to think that the attempt to destroy the depot indicates that the red devils have dug up the hatchet."

"Do you think they will attack the fort?"

"No; the white villains, who will no doubt direct their operations, will be too sharp to let them do that, as we are now well supplied with ammunition, but I fear that much damage will be done at unprotected points."

The next day Mr. Fillmore, the division superintendent, arrived.

"I shall only stop here about three hours," he said to Rob and Larry, who were at the depot to meet him, "then I shall start to San Francisco, and I want you boys to be ready to go with me."

The boys were delighted with the idea of going to California, but it must be confessed that Rob felt rather blue about leaving Lucy Howard.

But of course neither of the boys were at all disposed to disregard a wish of Mr. Fillmore's, and they fully appreciated his kindness in giving them a pleasant excursion before they commenced work.

So they bade their friends good-by, and taking the next train with Mr. Fillmore, were whirled off toward the Pacific coast.

During nearly the whole of the trip Rob and Larry made it a point to ride on the locomotive, or rather locomotives, for as a general thing they were changed at least once in every twelve hours; had it been otherwise, the engineers would have been changed, for until a man is perfectly familiar with his engine he cannot run it to the best advantage.

Rob and Larry could not have ridden on the locomotives without the permission of the division superintendents, but that was readily obtained for them by Mr. Fillmore.

For accounts of the boy's gallant behavior in their encounters with the train-wreckers had preceded them, and wherever they met a railroad man he was their friend from the moment he found out who they were.

With the engineers particularly Rob and Larry were prime favorites, and with the two boys these usually taciturn men laid aside their brusqueness and reticence and welcomed them heartily.

Nor was this to be wondered at, for heroes usually admire each other. The two boys had proved their right to be considered as such, and all really good locomotive engineers are naturally friendly.

For the employment of a locomotive engineer is one of continually recurring perils. He stands, as it were, in the forefront of the battle. If there is danger ahead he is the first to see it, and must be the first to meet it.

If death comes to any it must probably come to him. And frequently he is without any warning as to what danger may be ahead.

He must drive his iron horse over trestle-work, bridge and culvert, either of which may have been undermined by torrents and storms, or burned by sparks from the locomotive of a preceding train, even if the evil passions of men have not provided the means of a catastrophe.

As for Larry, he spent most of his time sitting on the tender, looking at the scenery, and talking with the fireman, as he said:

"It's no use at all in looking out and seeing nothing, when I can't do anything but sit here and wait for the engine to stop. I'll be as good as dead if I don't get out of here soon. I'll be as good as dead if I don't get out of here soon. I'll be as good as dead if I don't get out of here soon."

he learned a thousand and one things about the duties on a locomotive while it was in use.

The trip was very pleasant from the outset, and nothing of an extraordinary nature occurred until the boys were within a short distance of Sacramento.

It was after sundown, and the boys were as usual on the locomotive, when the engineer said to Rob:

"It is a pity that it is dark, so that you can't take a good look at the long bridge that we will pass directly."

"What bridge is it?" asked Rob.

"The bridge across American River, three miles this side of Sacramento; it is five thousand, seven hundred and fifty feet long."

"I had no idea that the river was so wide."

"It is not the usual breadth of the river which requires so long a bridge, but the distance to which it overflows its banks during the floods."

A few minutes afterward the engineer said:

"There seems to be a light ahead."

Rob looked ahead and saw a weird light, a halo of unearthly appearance. It shimmered and waved to and fro like a will-o'-the-wisp. It was a most ghastly white mist—a ghastly warning.

"Do you think it is on the track?" asked Rob.

"I can't tell yet," replied the engineer, and almost immediately afterward exclaimed: "Great God, the bridge is on fire!" and instantly whistled "down brakes," cut off the steam, and reversed the engine.

But he might as well have tried to stop a whirlwind as the locomotive in the distance between it and the bridge.

"Look out for yourselves!" he yelled. "I'm going to jump for it!" and the next instant both engineer and fireman sprang off the engine.

"Jump!" shouted Larry, leaping forward from the tender to where Rob was standing on the foot-board of the engine.

"No," replied Rob, "I'll stick to her if I die at my post; but do you jump."

"Sure, I'll not lave ye. Can't I help ye?"

"Not now. Get back on the tender; you are just in my way."

Nothing more was said. There was no time to say anything, for the bridge was not more than three hundred yards distant, and the fire which had been started by an incendiary at the bottom of the wooded beams which supported the bridge, was now flaming and roaring far above its top.

Believing that, as the train could not be stopped, the faster they went the better, Bob whistled to have the brakes taken off, and threw the throttle valve wide open and gave the engine all the steam there was.

It was a steep down grade, and the train shot ahead as if it had been fired out of a cannon.

The next instant the locomotive dashed on to the swaying, trembling bridge, and plunged straight onward into the roaring sea of fire.

Larry cowered down among the coal in the tender, but Rob stood erect, as an engineer should stand, with his hand on the throttle valve and his look ahead.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THROUGH THE FLAMES.

The conductor and several of the passengers who looked out of the windows of the cars when they heard the signal to put on the brakes saw the engineer and fireman jump off the engine, and then followed by Larry.

Almost as the train was about to enter the flames, it was



known through the train that there was danger ahead, and that the engineer and fireman had deserted their posts, and this produced a general impression that the peril was not only great, but unavoidable.

Consequently almost everyone was scared nearly to death; women screamed or fainted, and strong men turned pale and trembled, and well they might, for there was good cause to suppose that they were being hurried at lightning speed to certain destruction.

Some of the passengers remained motionless in their seats, and with sinking hearts awaited their fate, but others rushed to the doors of the cars, intending to jump off; the speed of the train, however, was so frightful that they shrank back dismayed, and it was well they did, for both the engineer and fireman were fatally injured when they jumped off.

When the signal to let go the brakes was heard everyone was astonished except Mr. Fillmore, who at once jumped to a right conclusion, and cried out:

"Thank God, there is hope yet; Railroad Rob is on the engine!"

"What good can he do?" asked the conductor, hurriedly; "he is only a boy."

"He is a hero, and if mortal man can save us, he will do it; pray he may succeed."

And indeed no one ever stood in greater need of prayers than did Rob at that moment, for it was just at this time that the locomotive dashed onto the bridge.

Blinded by the glare of the flames which curled and roared around him, scorched and blackened by the fierce heat, and half suffocated by the dense smoke, Rob stood at his post steadily as if he had been made of iron, instead of flesh and blood.

He felt the bridge sway and tremble beneath him as if it were made of a brittle material, and heard an ominous cracking noise, as if the partly consumed timbers were breaking beneath the weight of the swift rushing train.

As the danger was, it passed like a flash, for such was the speed at which the cars were moving that almost before Rob could realize it, the train was thundering along on the further bank of the river.

The whole thing transpired in a moment; but a dozen such moments were worse than death, and would furnish terror and agony enough for a lifetime.

Soon after the bridge was passed Rob whistled to have the engine put on, and shut off the steam, for the dull, oppressive roar as he shot through rock cuttings, the rocking and straining of the engine, and the almost inconceivable velocity at which the driving wheels revolved, indicated that the speed of the train was something awful.

In fact, such was the momentum of the train that Rob did not feel that the speed was sufficiently slowed to give him complete control of the engine until he was fully a mile and a half from the river.

Then, and not till then, Rob and Larry, who for some minutes past had been tugging away at the tender brakes, clasped hands; but their hearts were too full for words.

Knowing the importance of running on time, Rob did not think it proper to stop the engine at once, but kept on until he reached the station at Sacramento, which was only about a mile and a half farther.

Soon as the cars stopped the passengers poured out of the train and crowded around the engine, their faces pale, shouting and hurrying for Rob and Larry.

Not a few were actually sick, and some of the most excited were pulled out of the engine, and in spite of all he could do they crowded him around on their shoulders.

Rob and Larry were surrounded or half-surrounded by the general crowd; but they made almost no mark in the great throng as they

did over Rob, for, though he had not done as much, he stuck to the engine and took equal risks.

Both Rob and Larry, however, were anxious to escape from the well-meant but embarrassing civilities showered upon them, but did not know how to do so without being rude.

All at once, however, the crowd gave way to allow Mr. A. N. Towne, the general superintendent of the Central Pacific Railroad, to approach them.

He had heard of what the boys had done, and after thanking them, expressed a desire to reward them, and to give them situations on the road.

"You must not be jumping my claim, Mr. Towne," said Mr. Fillmore, coming forward and shaking hands with him. "I have a prior claim to these young gentlemen."

"Then, of course, I'll not interfere; but I would like to have these young men, nevertheless," replied Mr. Towne.

"I was on my way to San Francisco to see you."

"So I supposed. I received your dispatch, and expected to return there this evening, but will have to remain here until the bridge across American River is repaired, or at least until the work is properly started."

"Where will you stop?"

"At the Golden Eagle Hotel. I will always be there after dark, but will stay at the river during the daytime."

"Then I'll stop here, and perhaps we can arrange our business in the evenings."

"That is a good idea. I'll see you to-night, then, so good-by for the present," and thereupon Mr. Towne got on an engine and went down to the American River to see about the burning bridge, while Mr. Fillmore, with Rob and Larry, drove to the Golden Eagle Hotel.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE PENALTY OF BEING FAMOUS.

The morning after their arrival at Sacramento Mr. Fillmore handed Rob and Larry each a roll of greenbacks, containing several hundred dollars, and said:

"Here is some pocket money for you; there is plenty more where it came from, and I want you to use it freely."

"We are very much obliged to you," replied Rob, "but we would rather not accept any money until we earn it."

"You have already earned a great deal more than that."

Rob and Larry, however, insisted that they did not wish to receive money for what they had done, but Mr. Fillmore would not listen to them, and ended the conversation by saying:

"I intend that you shall enjoy yourself during this trip, and you will make me angry if you do not let me be your banker."

After that, of course, Rob and Larry had to drop the subject.

This matter being settled, Mr. Fillmore told the boys that he had some business to attend to, and that they must amuse themselves as they thought best.

"I say, Larry," remarked Rob, when they were left by themselves, "as we have to take the money, we had better buy some clothes, for we begin to look a little shabby."

"There we have plenty of money," said Mr. Fillmore, "replied Larry.

"That is very true, and as soon as we get to town we will buy what we left there; but in the meantime we must do something to wear, for it will hardly do to go about in our old clothes. I will go to the store and buy some new clothes, and you go to the store and buy some new clothes."



"You're roight, an' there's no rayson why we should not have iverything wè nade, seein' that we've plinty av money," assented Larry, who never before in the whole course of his life had so large a sum that he could call his own.

A clothing store was soon found, and after the boys had rigged themselves up in first-class style, they sallied forth to take a look at the city, and saw plenty of things that interested them, for Sacramento is one of the handsomest cities west of the Rocky Mountains.

On returning to the hotel to dñner, they were informed by Mr. Fillmore that he was going to the theatre with some friends and wanted them to accompany him.

Rob and Larry had been going about all day and would rather have gone to bed, but they did not wish to appear rude, and accepted the invitation.

Soon after dark Mr. Fillmore carried them to the principal parlor of the hotel, which they found filled with ladies and gentlemen in evening dress, who arose to their feet, and moving to either side left the boys standing in an open space.

Neither Rob nor Larry had ever been in such a fashionable assemblage before, and very naturally felt rather bashful.

Nor was what occurred immediately after their entrance into the parlor at all calculated to restore their self-possession.

For one of the leading lawyers of Sacramento stepped in front of them, and after making a very flowery speech, in which he praised the two boys up to the skies, presented each of them with a magnificent gold watch and chain.

Rob and Larry blushed up to the tips of their ears, but the former managed to utter some few words of acknowledgment, though he scarcely knew what he said.

Engraved on the case of Robert's watch were the following words:

"Presented to Railroad Rob, as a testimonial of gratitude, by those who were on the train which dashed across the burning bridge over the American River."

The inscription on Larry's watch was exactly the same, except that his name was used instead of Rob's.

Rob and Larry were introduced to the ladies and gentlemen present, and after a few minutes' pleasant conversation the whole party entered carriages and were driven to the theatre.

Seats had already been engaged, and our heroes were shown to places in the front row of one of the proscenium boxes.

The performance had not commenced, and as soon as Rob and Larry made their appearance the orchestra struck up with: "See the Conquering Hero Comes."

The scene which followed baffles description.

The theatre was packed from pit to dome; every eye in that vast assemblage was fixed on the two boys; hats and handkerchiefs were waved on all sides, and from thousands of throats went up cries of: "Hurrah for Railroad Rob! Hurrah for Larry Dolan! Three cheers for the boy heroes!"

The cheers were given with a will, and repeated over and over again; the audience seemed to be wild with enthusiasm, and for a while it looked as if they were inclined to stop hurrahing.

If it were possible for two boys to blush themselves completely red, Rob and Larry would surely have done so.

They were so much confused that they hardly knew whether they were standing on their heads or their heels, and if they had followed each and followed them they would have got out of the theatre as rapidly as possible.

But Mr. Fillmore, who was standing up and bowing to the audience, had them led to the dressing room.

Although the performance of the play, the curtain arose, and the performance continued.

"How do ye feel?" Rob asked Larry, in a whisper, after they set down.

"Shure, I'd sooner be up to my neck in thè worst bog in County Kerry than where I am."

"That is my mind to a dot; I feel as if I could crawl into a knot-hole."

The boys, however, consoled themselves with the idea that nothing further would be done to direct attention to them, but in this they were disappointed, for it was a variety performance, and several of the actors "got off gags" about them, which brought down the house every time.

At length, however, the performance came to an end, and when Rob and Larry got back to the hotel and retired to the room which they occupied together, they experienced a feeling of relief which may be imagined, but cannot be described.

"It's a holy show they made of us entirely," said Larry, as he filled his pipe for a quiet smoke.

"Yes," answered Rob, "and I'd rather take a beating than to go through with it again."

"Sure, it's foine watches they give us, onyhow," remarked Larry, drawing out his elegant timepiece and examining it with unconcealed satisfaction.

"There is no doubt of that," replied Rob, looking at his watch, "and we ought to be very grateful; but I hate all of this parade."

"An' so do I."

"If you have no objection, to-morrow I will ask Mr. Fillmore to send us back and let us go to work."

"You'd better, for it's a little pace we'll have, I'm thinkin', while we stay here."

This having been determined upon, the boys rolled into bed and were soon fast asleep.

## CHAPTER XX.

### OFF TO SAN FRANCISCO.

True to his resolution, Rob the next morning asked Mr. Fillmore to send him and Larry back to some point on the Union Pacific Railroad, and let them go to work.

But Mr. Fillmore, after listening to the reasons for this request, laughed and said:

"My dear boy, I fully appreciate your modesty, and honor you for it, but you are too sensitive; the attentions which you and Larry have received are such as any man might be proud of, and you will no doubt remember them with pride in the future."

"That may be, sir," replied Rob, "but they distress us now."

"Well, well, say no more about it; Mr. Towne has promised to go to San Francisco with us to-morrow, and then you will be free from annoyance; in the meantime you and Larry must not think of going back, for I shall be very much disappointed if you do not make the entire trip with me."

This was said in such a kind manner that Rob could not for the life of him say another word on the subject, but went back to Larry and reported progress.

"Be jabers, we can stay in our rooms, thin," said Larry.

"We can do better than that," replied Rob. "Let us go and look at the machine shops."

This suggestion was acted upon, and the boys spent a very pleasant day in the workshops of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, which are very extensive, and where about one thousand men, exclusively of laborers and trainmen, are employed.



The next morning, bright and early, the two boys, with Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Towne, left Sacramento in the private car of the latter gentleman, and in due time arrived at San Francisco, and put up at the Grand Hotel.

Mr. Fillmore had a great deal of railroad business to attend to, so the boys were left to themselves most of the time.

But, of course, in San Francisco and its vicinity they found plenty of things to interest and amuse them.

For San Francisco is the most charming place in California, and California is a land of beauty and wonders. Indeed, its enthusiastic citizens stoutly maintain that it matters not whether you have driven tandem on the Great Wall of China, bathed in the public baths of Yokohama, hunted bears in the wilds of Siberia, the Bengal tiger in the jungles of India, or the snow-pheasant on the peaks of the Himalaya—you have done comparatively little if you have not "done" California.

Rob and Larry visited the important public buildings, saw money coined at the mint, went to Woodward's and other public gardens, wandered through the Chinese quarter, with its queer sights and odd signs, sailed on the splendid bay, and, in short, had a good time generally, just as two wide-awake young fellows, with plenty of money and leisure, would be likely to do.

In this way five days quickly passed, and on the sixth the boys hired a horse and drove out to the celebrated Cliff House, on Point Lobos, which is on the southern side of the entrance to the Golden Gate.

After partaking of a hearty dinner at the hotel, Rob and Larry strolled along the cliffs until they were opposite the Seal Rocks, so called from the scores of seals which are constantly swimming around or climbing upon them.

Seating themselves in a cozy little recess in the cliff, the boys gave themselves up to the enjoyment of inhaling the fresh, balmy breeze of the Pacific, and looking at the seals gamboling in the surf and on the rocks.

An hour, or an hour and a half passed; the breeze freshened to a gale, and the waves began to thunder on the shore.

The tumult of the wind and waves made conversation somewhat difficult, and the boys concluded that they had better start back to the city.

But what sound can drown the faintest whisper of the human tongue when the heart is beating with passion—whether of love or hate?

Just as the boys were about to move they heard, above the roaring of the waves, the tone of a voice which they had just learned to recognize.

Leaving and breathing with strong emotion, they covered their ears in their hands, and then they were startled from their reverie, and as they looked they heard the following words:

"Well, as I was saying, ever since the smash-up at Medicine Bow River the cavalry have been scouring the country far and wide, and as the gang has to keep hid until the storm blows over, I took advantage of the opportunity to come to San Francisco."

The speaker was evidently not more than a yard or two distant, though he was hid from view by the rocks, but Rob and Larry would both have been willing to take an oath that they knew who he was.

Being eager to hear more, however, they merely exchanged glances and remained motionless.

"What I wanted to sell that lot of jewelry which I gave you." "Gave, indeed! I rather like that. I paid you twice as much for the articles as any regular fence would have done."

"That is all bosh; but let it pass. Can you think of any way by which I can get possession of the girl?" "It is a great pity that you could not carry her off when you tried to do so."

"It would not be a very healthy place for you, truly, if you were recognized."

"You can bank on that."

"What did you come for, then?"

"I wanted to sell that lot of jewelry which I gave you."

"Gave, indeed! I rather like that. I paid you twice as much for the articles as any regular fence would have done."

"That is all bosh; but let it pass. Can you think of any way by which I can get possession of the girl?"

"It is a great pity that you could not carry her off when you tried to do so."

"Yes. I had the devil's own luck, and it makes me madder than a hornet to think that I was balked by two mere boys, for they were scarcely grown."

"I don't think that you can succeed in carrying her off from Fort Steele."

"I fear not."

"We must get the old man to bring her to San Francisco."

"I don't see how that can be done."

"I think that we can manage it with the 'Valuable Intelligence' dodge."

"How?"

"By putting an advertisement in the papers that Percy Howard, or any of his children, will hear something very much to their advantage if they will call at——"

Just at this moment the two rascals moved away, and neither Rob nor Larry could hear another word, though they strained their ears to do so.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AN UNSUCCESSFUL CHASE.

"That bates iv'rything," ejaculated Larry. "Who'd thought av findin' that thafe av ther woruld here?"

"You feel certain that you recognized his voice, do you?"

"Shure, I'd know it among tin thousand."

"We must have him arrested."

"An' d'ye think there's officers out here in ther counthry?"

"I think not; but he will probably return to San Francisco before dark, and then we can have him nabbed."

Rising cautiously from their place of concealment, Rob and Larry saw the two men whose conversation they had overheard sauntering back toward the hotel.

After waiting a short time, so as to allow the men to get a little further ahead, the boys issued from the recess in the cliff, and followed them.

One of the men was short and stout, but the other was tall and broad-shouldered, and the latter—as the reader has, no doubt, already surmised—the boys felt certain was Red Dick, chief of the train-wreckers.

But when Rob and Larry had got a chance at the hotel to look at the face of the tall man without attracting attention, they could scarcely refrain from uttering exclamations of astonishment.

Instead of the savage-looking outlaw, with bristling red hair and beard, and cruel, blood-shot eyes, whom they expected to see, they saw a mild-mannered man, with glossy black hair and whiskers, and who wore a pair of green goggles, which effectually concealed his eyes.

The dress of the supposed outlaw also added to the bewilderment of the boys.

He was dressed in an irreproachable suit of black broadcloth, and he had a pair of green goggles, which effectually concealed his eyes, and a pair of green goggles, which effectually concealed his eyes.



his immaculate shirt, nine out of ten ordinary observers would have thought that he was a minister of the Gospel.

Everything about the appearance of the man was so entirely different from what they expected that the boys were badly staggered.

But it occurred to Rob, that after all the man before him might be Red Dick cleverly disguised, so drawing Larry to one side, he said:

"Go and have our horse and buggy got ready, so that we can start at a moment's notice."

"Sure he'd know us if he wor Red Dick."

"I am by no means certain of that, for he only saw us about dusk and after dark, during moments of great excitement; besides, we are dressed very differently from what we were then, and have both had our hair cut recently."

"Yis, and me mustache has grow'd since thin."

Rob secretly chuckled at the idea of Larry's appearance being changed by the few straggling hairs on his upper lip, but he gravely replied:

"There may be something in that. But go ahead and see about the horse while I keep an eye upon our man."

Larry made no further remark, but did as he was requested, and soon returned with the information that the horse and buggy were ready.

Rob, of course, did not know whether the man he suspected would return to San Francisco that afternoon or not, but supposed he would do so, for not one out of a thousand of those who visit the Cliff House remain over night.

Nor was Rob mistaken in his supposition, for in less than an hour after the two men returned to the hotel, the short, stout one—who had the appearance of a prosperous sporting man—ordered that his team should be brought out.

A few minutes later a spanking pair of bays, drawing a light trotting wagon, were brought to the door, and the two men took their seats in the vehicle and started toward the city.

Rob and Larry lost no time, but jumped into their buggy and followed.

"We will find out where our man stops," said Rob as they started off, "and then, if it is necessary, we can get a detective to assist us in investigating the case."

This was all very well devised, but Rob did not take into consideration the fact that he was driving an old livery stable horse, while the man he was following rode behind a pair of fast trotters.

The boys, however, were not long left in ignorance about this matter.

The carriage road from the Cliff House to San Francisco is the best in the State, and is a favorite place for speeding horses.

Soon after starting the driver of the bays "let them out," and they flew along the road at a three-minute gait.

But Rob soon stopped whipping him, for he saw that it was utterly impossible for him to keep up with the team in front.

Forward and backward became the pattern of the bay trotters' heads as they swept over the ground in their tearing race.

Rob and Larry were left behind as if they had been stopped, and when they finally reached the city the wagon which they started to follow had long since disappeared in the crowd of the numerous streets.

"That's the worst luck I ever had," said Rob, "this is the worst luck I ever had; the more I think of it the more firmly am I convinced that the man before me was Red Dick, and I'll never be satisfied until I have him back."

"What will be the result of this?" replied Larry, "but what will be the result of this?"

"We had better see Mr. Fillmore as soon as possible."

"An' get laughed at for lettin' Red Dick slip through our fingers so nately?"

"No—no; he will not blame us, you may be sure, though he will no doubt feel sorry that we were not more successful."

And Rob was right. Mr. Fillmore was at the hotel when the boys reached it, and after listening with breathless interest to what they had to tell, said:

"I should probably have done exactly as you did under the same circumstances. But if it was really Red Dick, his arrest would have saved thousands of dollars to Pacific Railroad companies."

"Perhaps we can find him yet," suggested Rob. "I don't think he has any idea that we suspected who he was."

"Well, that matter will have to be attended to by the detectives, for we must go east on the next train."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes, every man ought to be at his post; it is now evident that the burning of the American river bridge was the work of an incendiary."

"Has he been captured?"

"No, and probably never will be."

"That is bad."

"Yes; but it is not the worst news I have; there is wild work going on along the line of the Union Pacific Road; within the last forty-eight hours two express cars have been robbed, and a passenger train wrecked and plundered."

"Is it possible?"

"There is no doubt of it, and that is not all; the railroad and telegraph lines have both been cut west of Bitter Creek, and the military authorities here have grave reasons to believe that Fort Steele and several other points near by have been captured by Indians and renegade whites."

Rob heard no more, his anxiety about Lucy Howard completely unmanned him, his head spun around, he gasped for breath, and if Larry had not supported him to a bed he would have fallen to the floor.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ROB UNDERTAKES A DANGEROUS JOB.

Larry, with Mr. Fillmore's assistance, laid Rob on the bed, removed his collar and cravat, sprinkled water on his face, and commenced to chafe his hands.

But Rob almost immediately began to recover from his fainting fit—if fainting fit it could be called—for he did not entirely lose his senses.

Though his weakness was of brief duration, he continued to have a dull, heavy pain at the heart, and he fully realized the fact that he loved Lucy Howard with all the strength of his strong, earnest nature.

Strange as it may seem, Rob was not fully aware of this fact before, for, though he was conscious of feeling a strong interest in Lucy, he had not attempted to analyze his feelings.

But now he had no further doubt on the subject, and the idea that the girl who had won his heart was murdered, or in the hands of the Indians and lawless white men, almost drove him frantic.

"Never mind about rubbing my hands," he said. "I am better now," and he sat up on the edge of the bed.

"I'd lie down a little while, if I were you," replied Mr. Fillmore, "and you will be all right by the time we have to leave."

"When will we go?"

"On the train which starts at forty-five minutes after six this afternoon, and in the meantime I will send for a detective, so that you can give him a description of Red Dick."



Thereupon Mr. Fillmore left the room, and Rob remarked to Larry.

"I never had such a strange swimming in my head before. I feel as if I could neither see nor stand up."

"An' no wonder," replied Larry. "Sure, the bad news took away me breath entirely."

"But, after all, it may be a false alarm, for Colonel Morrow, who was in command at Fort Steele, said he could hold the place against any number of Indians."

"I remimber it well, an' I'm thinkin' we'll foind Miss Lucy and the rest av thim safe enough."

"God grant it may be so; but if they have been carried off or murdered, I'll never rest until I avenge them."

"Nor I."

The conversation which followed between the two boys was, as may readily be supposed, in relation to their hopes and fears about their friends at Fort Steele, and need not be repeated here.

About an hour after he went away Mr. Fillmore returned with a detective who had been detailed by the chief of police to search for Red Dick, and arrest him if possible.

Rob gave a description of the man whom he believed to be the outlaw, and the officer, after promising to communicate with Mr. Fillmore if Red Dick was found, took his leave.

Mr. Fillmore and the boys then took a carriage and were driven to the wharf of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, crossed over the bay to Oakland on the steamer El Capitan, and started east on the train which left a few minutes afterwards.

Over dizzy trestles, through endless snow sheds and dark tunnels, along by granite cliffs and sparkling lakes and streams, sped the train, until the summit of the Sierra Nevada mountains was passed, and then went spinning down the eastern slope into the hot, thick alkali dust of the plains.

Night and day, through rain and shine, they were carried onward at an average speed of twenty miles an hour; but, owing to their impatience to get ahead, Rob and Larry thought their progress was unusually slow.

Rob and Larry had been very anxious to get on the train, and had been waiting for information, but the only reliable intelligence which could be gathered was that the Indians had not yet been seen, and that the train was safe. The only reliable intelligence beyond that point was stopped.

From what could be gathered, it seemed more than probable that a number of stations had been captured, and there were a good many rumors about atrocities which were said to have been committed by the red devils.

Many were the blood-curdling stories which Rob and Larry heard about the fate of prisoners who were captured by the Indians, and about the way in which they were treated. They were told that the Indians had been very cruel to the prisoners, and that they had been killed and burned. They were told that the Indians had been very cruel to the prisoners, and that they had been killed and burned.

On the first of the roads which connect the Pacific and Atlantic, Mr. Fillmore expected to ascertain the true state of affairs; but in this he was disappointed, for the only reliable intelligence there than had already been heard was that the train was safe.

At Ogden, Mr. Fillmore was told that the train was safe, and that the Indians had not yet been seen. He was told that the train was safe, and that the Indians had not yet been seen.

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There were five locomotives and a number of freight cars at the station, and while some of the latter were being attached to the train, for the accommodation of the cavalry company and their horses, Rob said to Mr. Fillmore:

"If you will let me, I'd like to take one of those engines out of the round-house and go on a few hundred yards in front of the train."

"It is a good idea," replied Mr. Fillmore, "and may save the train from meeting with a serious accident; but I don't like to expose you to the risk."

"Never mind the risk, sir, and if anything should happen to me, it had much better be to one or two than to a hundred."

Rob lost no time, but with the assistance of Larry and the wiper, got up steam on the "Juno," which he was told was the best engine in the round-house, and brought her out on the track in front of the train.

"You ought to have two or three men with you," suggested Mr. Fillmore, when Rob reported that he was ready.

"All I need is a fireman," replied Rob, "and I'd rather have Larry than anyone else."

"But one of you may be hurt, and to guard against accidents I think there should be someone else on the locomotive."

"I'll go with him," put in a tall man with a patch over one of his eyes, and light-brown hair, which looked as if it was pasted down against the side of his face.

"Do you think you can fire on a locomotive?" asked Mr. Fillmore.

"Oh, I kin sling in ther wood and coal," replied the man with a decided nasal drawl.

"All right; get on the locomotive, then. And now, Rob, you had better start; keep a sharp lookout, and don't run faster than ten miles an hour. We will follow along some three or four hundred yards behind you."

The man who offered to go with Rob and Larry on the locomotive was one of those who volunteered and came with the soldiers from Ogden, and he also came from San Francisco on the same train with Rob, who did not like his looks at all, and would willingly have dispensed with his company.

But, of course, it would have been very rude to have suggested this, so Rob, with his unwelcome companion, got on the locomotive where Larry was already awaiting him, and started off on his self-imposed mission, which was perilous enough to have made the boldest think twice before undertaking it.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### LARRY'S PERIL.

It was some time after sundown when Rob, on the locomotive "Juno," started from Bitter Creek station.

But as the sky was perfectly clear, and there was a full moon which made it nearly as bright as day, neither the headlight of the Juno nor that of the engine drawing the train were lit, and it was understood that the whistles were not to be sounded any louder than might be absolutely necessary to give signals to respective engineers.

For it was feared that the headlights and whistles might attract the attention of prowling savages, even though they were so far away that they would not otherwise know that a train was passing.

In which event it was feared that the train would be captured and the passengers killed. The train was moving slowly, and the engines were not lit.

The train was moving slowly, and the engines were not lit. The train was moving slowly, and the engines were not lit.







Had he fallen, his fate would have been sealed at once.

But as he instinctively grappled with his assailant, he fortunately got his right hand in the cravat of the tall man and held on like grim death.

Though Bob could not be thrown down while he retained his grasp on the man's cravat, he was at first in a very disadvantageous position, being bent back, so that he could not exert his strength to much advantage.

Luckily his left hand came in contact with a lever, which moved when he pushed against it, but offered sufficient resistance to give him a purchase that enabled him to assume an erect attitude.

Though Rob did not know it at this time, the lever which did him such good service was the one that controlled the throttle-valve, and when it was moved it gave the Juno all the steam there was.

Like a greyhound let loose from its leash when the game is in sight, the engine darted forward with rapidly increasing speed.

It bounded like a mad thing on the rails; the couplings of the tender creaked and strained; the red-hot cinders from the chimney looked like the trail of an enormous rocket, and the glare from the furnace flew like flashes of aurora borealis along the ground.

The swaying motion of the locomotive grew to a quick, swinging jolt, and the sound of the opening and shutting of the valves, as they alternately let on and cut off the steam, became faster and faster till they rattled like the continuous roll of a drum.

The steam monster seemed instinct with life, and as it swept onward in its wild career, although not a breath of air was stirring, a hurricane, cold and piercing, seemed to be tearing by it.

The engineer of the train on which the troops were had been directed to keep along some four hundred yards in the rear of Rob, and on seeing the Juno dash ahead, he supposed it was an indication that the track was all clear, and endeavored to keep up, but owing to the weight of the train it was left further and further behind every moment.

But Rob was in no condition to notice any of these things, for he was struggling desperately for his life.

Locked together so closely that neither of them could draw a weapon, he and the tall man swayed to and fro in the narrow space on the engine, and strained every nerve to overcome each other.

At first Rob thought that he had encountered a madman, but early in the struggle a brown wig fell from the head of his adversary and the patch from over his eye, and Rob saw that he was grappling with Red Dick himself.

But this discovery in no way daunted Rob, but rather enraged him, and he cried out:

"Now I know you, you scoundrel!"

"You won't know me easily again," replied Red Dick, grinding his teeth together and endeavoring to force Rob against the boiler and burn him.

But Rob was not to be so easily overthrown, and he managed to wheel Red Dick around and press him against the heated furnace, which made him howl with pain, though the contact was only a moment's duration.

Owing to the jolting motion in which they were, neither Red Dick's superior strength nor Rob's greater agility could be carried to the full advantage, and it is hard to say how the struggle would have ended if something had not intervened to break the continuity of the combatants' exertions.

Larry, who had been watching the scene from a distance, suddenly realized what was going on.

He was soon on his feet, but owing to the jolting and jumping of the train, and the struggles of the two antagonists, he could not immediately aid Rob.

But in a few moments he got a chance to clap a pistol against Red Dick's head and fire.

Uttering a yell of pain and horror, Red Dick sprang back so violently that he was not only jerked loose from Rob, but leaped off the train.

How he struck the ground neither of the boys saw, for Rob, finding that the engine was running away, directed Larry to swing on the brake of the tender, while he cut off the steam. He did not dare to reverse while going at such terrific speed, for he knew that if he did so the steam-chests would probably be burst.

At first it seemed as if it would be impossible to get the locomotive under control, and Rob did not succeed in stopping it until he was within sixty yards of the depot at Fort Steele.

As the engine came to a stop, a perfect host of painted savages sprang up on all sides, yelling like fiends, and opened fire on the two boys.

Bang! bang! crack! pop! bang! went the guns, and the bullets whistled around the engine or crashed against it thick as hail.

Rob, however, heeded them not, but stood as if he had been turned to stone, with his eyes fixed on the depot.

The lower part of the building was in flames, and at a window in the upper story, where it did not seem possible that mortal aid could avail her, he saw Lucy Howard.

She, too, recognized Rob, and kneeling at the window, she stretched her snowy arms toward him in a mute appeal for help.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### EXPEDITION OF THE TRAIN-WRECKERS AND INDIANS.

Even at the present day there is little known of the country around the head waters of the North Platte River, save that it abounds in large game and hostile Indians.

The mountains in the North Park of Colorado, where this stream rises, are densely timbered, and from that locality many cross ties were procured by strong, well-armed parties when the Union Pacific Railroads were being constructed.

But small bands of hunters and trappers, who, tempted by the prospect of sport or gain, venture into these perilous wilds, rarely ever return, for the Indians, jealous of intrusion in their hunting grounds, fall upon and destroy them.

Being a shrewd, far-seeing rascal, Red Dick, from the commencement of his career as a robber, cultivated friendly relations with the savages.

For he did not know how soon he might need some place of refuge; and in the meantime he found it very convenient to have a strong force of red warriors who were ready at any and all times to join him and his band of train-wreckers in their marauding expeditions.

When the attempt was made to blow up the depot at Fort Steele, in which it was supposed the ammunition of the garrison was stored, Red Dick had several hundred Indians ready to assist in the proposed attack upon the fort.

The attempt to destroy the depot having failed, Red Dick abandoned his intention of attacking the fort, told his Indian allies to return to their homes and went to San Francisco.

Before starting home he also gave strict orders that the band of train-wreckers should remain quiet in their hiding places, for he was wise enough to foresee that if their place of concealment was discovered by the military, they would



searching for them, that they would inevitably be dispersed or destroyed in a short time.

Now there are very few things than an Indian, regards as more disgraceful than to return from the warpath without either spoils or scalps.

So after Red Dick departed for California the savages resolved that they would not go home empty-handed, and in this determination they were encouraged by the train-wreckers, many of whom agreed to join them in a plundering expedition along the railroad.

It may seem singular that Red Dick's men should so readily disobey his orders, but the reader must remember that in an association like that of the train-wreckers, held together only by the will of those composing it, there is necessarily considerable individual freedom of action.

In any event, inaction was too irksome, and the love of plunder too strong for the robbers to hesitate when there was a chance to avoid the former, and gratify the latter.

Thus it happened that at the very time Red Dick was flattering himself with the belief that the disturbance caused by his operations on the railroad would quiet down before he returned, his men and their red allies were performing deeds which threw the whole country into a perfect blaze of excitement.

When Red Dick heard of this, he was eager to get back to his band, and as related in the last chapter, volunteered to accompany Rob and Larry on the locomotive, intending, whenever he got near to his men and the Indians, to slip off and join them.

This he might have done, but his ungovernable temper being aroused by learning that Larry and Rob were instrumental in bringing about the disasters that recently overtook him and his band, he determined to murder the two boys, but failed in the attempt, as we have already seen.

It is now high time that the reader was informed of what the train-wreckers and Indians did.

Sweeping along the line of the railroad for some fifty miles, they captured two trains of cars, and also captured and burned every ranch and station, except Fort Steele and Rawlings, almost without opposition.

The people of Indian Territory spared neither age, sex nor condition, and the most fortunate of those who were in their power were those who met with speedy death.

For the hellish ingenuity with which the Indians of the Far West torture their prisoners almost surpasses belief, and the means are too horrible to be related here.

Gratified with plunder, and having many scalps and prisoners, the horde of red and white savages might have retreated without molestation, but, emboldened by success, they determined to capture Fort Steele.

And the cunning and daring manner in which they made the attempt was worthy of a better cause.

In the first place a small band of mounted Indians stampeded and drove off some cattle which were grazing at no great distance from the fort.

A company of the Second Cavalry, who were the only mounted men in the garrison, were immediately sent to pursue these Indians, and were soon out of sight.

Then a party of some two hundred Indians made their appearance upon the river of the guns in the fort, and determined to capture a number of white prisoners.

They were aided by the ground and small fires built upon the prairie, and out of the backs of other shrieking warriors, who were pulling the bows.

At this and much more could be plainly seen from the

fort, and it was a sight which no American soldier could witness without panting for revenge.

In fact, scarcely had the horrible work commenced before officers and men alike clamored to be led against the savages.

Nor did the lieutenant-colonel in command of the fort need any urging to go to the relief of the unfortunate prisoners.

The only men left in the fort after the departure of the company of cavalry were three companies of infantry, numbering, rank and file, all told, one hundred and eighty-three men.

Leaving twenty-five men commanded by Captain Atkinson to guard the fort, the lieutenant-colonel, with the rest of the garrison, marched out against the Indians.

The savages fell back, skirmishing stubbornly with the soldiers, who followed them up until the latter were more than a mile distant from the fort.

Then out of a ravine, where they had lain concealed, sprang up some three hundred Indians and attacked the infantry in the rear, while the savages, who had been retreating, turned and pressed fiercely upon them in front.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE CAPTURE OF THE FORT.

Attacked both in front and rear by a force outnumbering them more than three to one, the United States soldiers fully maintained the high reputation for gallantry and steadiness for which our troops on the frontier have ever been distinguished.

Like hawks the Indians swooped at them, but were met on all sides by a bristling line of steel and a withering fire, which made them swerve back, and scatter as if a hurricane had struck them.

But the savages retired only to return; dashing with marvelous rapidity and the most hideous yells back and forth, here and there, before and behind the soldiers, the painted warriors showered bullets and arrows upon the devoted little band, causing many a brave fellow to bite the dust.

It was clearly impossible to fight their way back to the fort, over the open plain, in the face of such overwhelming odds, but no thought of surrender entered the minds of either officers or men.

The movements of the Indians were so swift that it was almost impossible to hit them with a bullet, and the soldiers began to grow confused and dizzy by the infernal maze of flying figures rapidly weaving out before their eyes.

Faster and faster came the arrows and bullets until they flew thick as hailstones, and it was soon evident that if something was not done to escape from the fatal shower the whole command would be exterminated.

Some hundred yards to the left of the spot where the soldiers made their stand there was in a bend of the river a position, thickly covered with rocks and trees, affording the cover so much needed, and capable of much sturdy defense.

This Lieutenant-Colonel Morrow noticed with the eye of a soldier and the quickness of a man who meant to do a soldier's duty.

Calmly, as if on parade, he gave the necessary orders, and his men, with fixed bayonets, fell upon the foe who were swarming around them, burst through their ranks and gained the covered shelter, but left at least the fourth of their number dead upon the plain.



With their flanks and rear protected by the river, and sheltered in front by the trees and rocks, the soldiers were now in a position from which they could not very well be forced, except by a rush and desperate hand-to-hand fighting that is rarely the choice of Indians.

Twice, however, the savages and white renegades charged boldly upon the position where the soldiers stood at bay, but were repulsed.

Captain Atkinson, finally seeing that it was impossible to hold out any longer, deserted the fort after laying a train of powder to the magazine and firing it. They retreated to the railroad station, and shortly after a fearful explosion took place, and scores of savages were blown to atoms.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### DESPERATE CONDUCT OF ROB AND LARRY.

When the magazine in the fort blew up, the train-wreckers and Indians who were not killed or disabled were completely panic-stricken, and fled, scattering in every direction like a flock of birds among which a hawk has pounced.

The train-wreckers, however, readily understood what had happened, and soon regained their presence of mind, and with the Indians, who were emboldened by their example, returned to the scene of the disaster.

The spectacle of their unfortunate comrades, who were burned and mutilated beyond recognition, and of those who were still alive, but suffering horrible tortures, inflamed the passions of the Indians and train-wreckers to the highest degree, and they were to have a bloody revenge.

Looking upon a direct attack, the Indians selected fifty of their best riflemen, who dashed up to within thirty yards of the depot, wheeled and fired at the loopholes in the walls.

This maneuver was frequently repeated, but each time some of the attacking party were slain.

They kept up the attack, however, and in the night, under cover of darkness, a volley managed to creep up near enough to shoot an arrow wrapped with ignited tow into a lot of straw and other dry trash, which was unfortunately lying under and against the side of the building.

In a few minutes the lower part of the building was all in flames, and its occupants retreated to the upper story, preferring the fiery death which threatened them, to falling into the hands of the savages.

Those in the depot no longer sought to screen themselves, but appeared openly at the windows, hoping that they might be aided by bullets, and thus avoid being burned to death.

But with merciless malignity the Indians and train-wreckers ceased firing, and glanced over the prospect of seeing their victims perished in the flames.

Just at this time Rob and Larry—as before mentioned—came dashing along on the locomotive "Juno," and stopped near the burning depot.

Rob was so intent upon seeing Larry Howard in the flames, believing that he would not the train-wreckers and Indians, though they continued yelling and firing at him and Larry.

At the time I write of the Pacific Railroad had only been built a short time, and many of the Indians were afraid to approach its engines; but with the train-wreckers it was quite a different matter, and though Rob and Larry were fortunate enough to escape the danger of being aimed at them as they stopped, they would soon have been disposed of if the train were the only one. Indeed had not come that being along, and stopped a short distance behind them.

Little dreaming of what was in store for them, the Indians

and train-wreckers rushed toward the train, expecting to get both plunder and prisoners.

Recovering his presence of mind, Rob sprang to the tank of his engine, threw off the cover of the water-hole, and thrust his coat and handkerchief into the water, until they were completely saturated; then wrapping them around his head, he said to Larry.

"Get off the engine."

"What d'ye mane?" asked Larry.

"What I say."

Larry did not have the remotest idea of what Rob intended to do, but was determined to stick to him, so he moistened his coat and handkerchief, and tied them around his head as Rob had done.

There was no time to argue the matter, and seeing that Larry intended to remain with him, Rob threw open the throttle valve, ran the engine into the very middle of the burning depot, and stopped in the midst of the flames.

The moon and the burning depot made it nearly as light as day around the station at Fort Steele, though a ghostly-white mist had begun to creep up from the river and spread over the plain.

But inside of the cars it was dark, for the same reason that prevented the use of the headlight on the locomotive applied to the lamps in the cars, and they had not been lighted.

Consequently those on the train could distinctly see what was going on outside, while they themselves were not visible.

As the cars stopped, the Indians and the train-wreckers, who had whiter skins but blacker hearts, thronged around them thick as hops, little dreaming that they contained the fierce avengers of blood.

A rare old time the savages expected to have plundering and torturing and murdering the helpless creatures whom they supposed were now completely in their power, and to give their victims a foretaste of what was in store for them the band uttered blood-curdling yells, and brandished their gory weapons at the car windows.

But no shrieks of fainting women nor cries of frightened children were caused by this hideous demonstration.

It was answered in a manner that was as startling as it was unexpected.

Simultaneously the windows of the cars were thrown up, and from each and every one were thrust the black, ugly muzzles of guns and pistols.

There was a yell from the exultant soldiers—not a cheery, hoarse hurrah, but a hoarse, hungry roar, such as those utter when they bound upon their prey—a sharp, deadly crash of small arms, and the loaden missiles of death tore through the crowd of savages, rending and slaying them.

Not were the villains allowed time to recover from their consternation.

The soldiers and volunteers, each one eager to be the first, poured out of the cars, a perfect torrent of living valor, and hurled themselves like famished wolves upon the foe.

The charge was like a whirlwind; nothing living could withstand it.

Knowing that to pursue on foot would be useless, Captain Willett and his company of cavalry ran back to the train, jumped their horses off of the cars, mounted, and were soon on the haunches of the flying foe, and their sabers rose and fell, cleaving skulls and leaping off limbs until they became crimson with blood from hip to point.

Knowing that it was the best thing they could do to save themselves, the savages and train-wreckers broke together as they retreated, parrying as well as possible the volley coming with their rifle barrels, and keeping up an irregular fire which laid many a bold soldier low.

Dark and cloudy in smoke wreaths, the attacking force



kept right onward; its course was marked by the fallen, and ever and anon, from out of the powder-pall which enveloped it, dashed a riderless horse and scoured away over the plain.

Seeing this struggling, fighting mass of men surging toward them, the savages who had been besieging the soldiers from Fort Steele in the bend of the river, were panic-stricken and fled.

Soon as the force in front of his position disappeared, Lieutenant-Colonel Morrow determined to take a hand in the fight which was raging.

His men, though they had been without food ever since they took shelter among the rocks, were eager to avenge their comrades who fell on the day the fort was invested, and hailed their commander's determination with enthusiasm.

Leading his men along a shallow ravine, Lieutenant-Colonel Morrow posted them on its edge at the point toward which the savages and their antagonists were moving.

A number of the cavalymen had fallen, and though the company still hung on the traces of the savages and train-wreckers, their charges were neither so important nor furious.

Consequently the savages and their white companions were able to retreat with greater rapidity than when first attacked by the cavalry.

On they came, in a disorderly crowd, little dreaming of the grim death crouching in their way on the edge of the ravine.

"Make ready!"

Lieutenant-Colonel Morrow spoke in a low tone of voice, but his men were listening so intently for the order that they all heard him.

Sixty dark muzzles crept out to the front, and waited there, motionless.

"Take aim!"

"Fire!"

The edge of the ravine was fringed with flame, there was the sharp, crackling sound of many guns fired at once, and a storm of bullets, fired at point-blank range, mowed down the savages by dozens.

Staggered by the close, deadly volley, the Indians and train-wreckers reeled back, uttering yells of terror and dismay, while the soldiers, leaping out of the ravine, dashed down upon them with the bayonet.

Caught between the infantry and cavalry, as it were between two inexorable jaws which crushed and destroyed them, the outlaws and savages made superhuman exertions to escape, but beyond a few scattering shots fired by the boldest in retreat, there was no further resistance.

Scattering in the wildest confusion, and throwing away arms and every other encumbrance, they fled with feet winged by mortal terror.

For the infantry made none, but the cavalry chased and cut down the villains, as long as the nature of the ground permitted.

But why follow the deadly work under the sky and the stars? When it was ended there were few of the train-wreckers and Indians left to tell the tale, and the victors, weary with slaughter, marched back to Fort Steele.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A BRAVE DEED.

When Rob ran the locomotive into the burning depot and stopped it, he felt as if he had lost his soul, and was giving up his life.

Therefore Larry could not possibly have given a more striking

and unmistakable evidence of his perfect devotion to Rob than he did by remaining on the locomotive.

Rob himself knew that he was taking a fearful risk, but was determined to save Lucy Howard or perish in the attempt; and without hesitation staked his existence on the success of an experiment which had never been tried before.

He had read and been told that steam would extinguish fire, and upon this fact he relied, though he scarcely dared to hope that under the circumstances it would work.

When he entered the burning depot he felt as if he was going into a furnace. He did not falter, however, but stopped the locomotive in the middle of the building, threw open every valve which would allow the steam to escape, and left them open.

In an instant the depot was filled with a blinding cloud of steam, and if Rob's and Larry's mouths and noses had not been covered with their wet handkerchiefs they might have inhaled it, in which event the consequences would probably have been fatal.

Without waiting to see what effect the steam would have on the fire, Rob, with an ax in his hand, sprang off the engine on to the platform, and followed by Larry, who had snatched up a hatchet, rushed to the office door and commenced to hew it down, though the heat was so intense that it was difficult to breathe.

A few heavy blows sent it flying from its hinges, and hurrying over the burning floor, the boys rushed up to the second story.

Their appearance was hailed with the wildest joy by the imperilled men, women, and children, and hope, which had been abandoned, sprang anew in every heart.

Lucy Howard, in common with the other women, was nearly frantic, and when Rob approached her she fell into his arms, exclaiming:

"You will save us, I know you will!"

In fact, nearly everyone supposed that they could now get out of the depot without difficulty.

Rob by no means thought that this was certain, but he was too wise to utter a discouraging word when he believed that the only chance for safety depended upon coolness and promptness.

"Have you any water?" he asked, in a voice which was heard by everyone, after he had spoken an encouraging word to Lucy Howard.

"Several barrels full," replied Captain Atkinson.

"Then have all the blankets wetted, and let everyone wrap themselves up in them quickly as possible, for we must get out of here immediately."

Many hands make light work, and in a few minutes all had wet blankets wrapped around them, so as to shield their bodies, and all of their faces except their eyes.

"Are you all ready?" asked Rob.

"Ready," was the response.

"Then follow me, move quickly, and don't be afraid," saying which he took Lucy Howard in his arms, and led the way downstairs.

The rest followed him, Mr. Howard and the other wounded and sick being carried by those who were well.

When Rob got down into the office, he thought that it was not as hot as it was when he passed through it a minute before.

Of course, however, he made no pause to rest, but hurried through the room and on to the platform, along through which he ran, and sprang out of the burning building into the open air with his precious bundle.

He was immediately afterwards joined by the remainder of the party, and their feelings on getting out of the depot where



they expected to meet with a fiery death were too deep to be expressed in words.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### LARRY'S BROTHER.

The train-wreckers and Indians had now retreated about half a mile from the train, for it must be borne in mind that the circumstances related in the two preceding chapters occurred simultaneously.

There was no other place of shelter convenient, so the women, children, sick and wounded, were placed in some of the cars and sentinels stationed to give warning if an enemy approached.

Rob, with Larry, Captain Atkinson, and such of the soldiers as were disengaged, then turned back to the depot, to see if it was possible to save any of its contents.

To the astonishment of everyone, for even Rob scarcely expected such a result, the flames were rapidly disappearing; in a few minutes the fire was completely extinguished, and the depot was saved.

Rob explained that the fire had been put out by the steam which he allowed to escape from the locomotive, but at first his hearers could scarcely credit what he said. The proof was before their eyes, however, and they were forced to admit that he was right.

Soon as the smoke and steam had cleared away, so that it was safe to enter the depot, Rob and Larry went to take a look at the iron horse which had borne them so far and well.

The wood-work was found to be scorched, and the paint on the cab and tender was blistered, but otherwise the good engine was uninjured.

While on the locomotive inspecting it, Rob found a large pocketbook lying near the fire-hole.

"Where in the world could this have come from?" he exclaimed.

"Sure, ther bla'gard who was on ther ingin must ha' dropped it," replied Larry.

"I dare say that he did," assented Rob, who thereupon opened the pocketbook, which was found to contain a large amount in greenbacks, and several letters and papers, directed to Richard Morgan.

Forgetting any further examination of the pocketbook until a more convenient time, Rob secured it about his person, and with Larry went out to meet the soldiers, who were now returning from the pursuit of the Indians and train-wreckers.

Almost the first person the boys met was Mr. Fillmore, who had been taking an active part in the fight, and had escaped without a scratch.

He was delighted to see the boys, and when he learned how the depot was saved, expressed in unmeasured terms his admiration of Rob's indomitable courage and great presence of mind.

By this time the sun had commenced to rise, and on every side could be seen the bodies of dead men, and traces of the hot work of the Indians and train-wreckers.

The interior of the fire, which a few days before had been a model of neatness, was now filled with the kindling ruins.

About a quarter of a mile from the depot where the outlaws and savages bivouacked, were found large quantities of plunder, many horses, and some twenty-five or thirty prisoners, whose lives had no doubt been spared for a time, so that the Indians could return them to death at their leisure.

While Larry was conversing in admiration to the soldiers

of these unfortunates, he came in contact with an Irishman, who was among the rescued, and asked:

"An' knew ye iver Mike Dolan in this counthry?"

"Sure, I wor wid him thray days ago," replied the man.

"Where?" asked Larry, in a high state of excitement.

"On his faram a matter of twinty miles down the road; it's mor'n a year gone I've woruked wid him."

"Is he there now?"

"Sure, he wor tuk by ther Injuns whin I wor."

"An' what bekim av him?" asked Larry, with a sinking heart, eagerly scanning the faces of the other prisoners in hopes that he might find his brother among them.

"Bejabers an' that's mor'n I know meself," replied the man, whose name was O'Brien.

"How's that?"

"It wor late in ther av'nin' whin we wor tuk, an' ther red divils aftherwards kept thravlin' most av ther night, an' niver a horse wud they lind us, though it's plinty hey had."

"Well, an' didn't Mike come wid ye?"

"He started wid us, but I niver laid me eyes on him aftherwards."

"Why?"

"Ye see, his leg wor hurted whin they tuk him, an' maybe he couldn't kape up; an'—an' he might have got away."

The honest fellow would willingly have produced the impression that Mike Dolan had escape, though he believed that he had seen others during that terrible night march of which he had spoken.

But Larry was too shrewd to suppose that his brother had escaped, when one of his legs was disabled, while others, who were unhurt, could not do so.

In fact, Larry not unnaturally concluded that Mike was certainly dead, which was more than O'Brien knew to be the case, and his heart was nearly broken by the idea.

Rob tried in vain to console him, or make him hope that his brother might be alive.

There was a great deal to be done, and every one who was able went to work with a will, Larry among the rest, for he was the last person in the world to remain idle when his services were needed.

When the order was given to knock off from work everyone was tired enough to sleep without rocking.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### GATHERING UP THE THREADS.

The morning after the occurrences mentioned in the preceding chapter, Rob examined the contents of the large pocketbook which he found on the locomotive.

He first counted the money, and ascertained that there was three thousand two hundred and some odd dollars, principally in large bills.

Among a number of telegrams and other papers, relating to things of which he knew nothing, was a letter postmarked London, England.

This letter, like all of those which had any address, was directed to Richard Morgan, and contained an advertisement cut from a newspaper which read as follows:

"Heirs Wanted.—If the heirs of Alice Howard (maiden name Arundel) will communicate with Lester Williams, solicitor, Gray's Inn, London, England, they will hear something very much to their advantage. A liberal reward will be given for information of the said heirs, if alive, or for proof of their death."



The letter in which this advertisement was enclosed was as follows:

"London, Nov. 25th, 1863.

"DEAR DICK:

"Old Arundel shuffled off this mortal coil on the 10th instant, after an illness of some two months. I called several times, but was refused admission, as he had taken up an idea that we were to blame for the way he treated his daughter, Alice, though, as you very well know, it was more his own fault than that of any one else. He made a will leaving all of his property to her children, and if you can find the girl and marry her you will make a big hit, as the estate is worth at least a million pounds sterling.

"If the children are dead, and you can forward proof of the fact, the solicitor, whose advertisement is enclosed, will pay you three or four hundred pounds for the information.

"We are all well, write soon.

"Your affectionate father,

"B. B. MORGAN."

"Whew!" said Rob, "here is something that concerns Mr. Howard and Lucy," and he took the papers to that gentleman.

Mr. Howard, who was now sufficiently recovered from his wounds to sit up, was somewhat excited when he read the letter and advertisement; but Lucy, who had never seen her grandfather, was very little affected by hearing of his death, and seemed not to care much about being a great heiress.

During the conversation that followed Mr. Howard related his history, which I take the liberty of condensing.

When a young man, Percy Howard, a native of New York, while visiting England, met and fell in love with Alice Arundel, the only child of Sir Hector Arundel, the owner of a princely estate in Kent.

Howard's love was reciprocated by Alice Arundel, but her father, who wished to keep his estate in the family, persistently refused his consent to their marriage, and ordered her to prepare to wed her cousin, Richard Morgan.

Richard Morgan, whom the reader has known as Red Dick, was at that time a wild, reckless young man, and Alice Arundel, who had some of the unbending spirit of her father, positively refused to marry him.

Whereupon Sir Hector Morgan confined her to the house, and swore that she should either obey him or die single.

But love laughs at locksmiths, and the proud, petted beauty, forsaking her home and fortune, fled with the young American who had won her heart, and was wedded to him.

Knowing the violent temper of Sir Hector Arundel, and the desperate disposition of Richard Morgan, the young couple sought concealment, and in one of the least visited islands of the Channel Archipelago, found a home, where they were never discovered.

In this secluded spot Percy Howard and his young wife spent seven years of almost unalloyed happiness, during which time they were blessed with four children—three boys and one girl, whose names the reader has already made.

Then, dreading the idea of rearing their children among the rude, uneducated people by whom they were surrounded, the Howards, in an early hour, removed to Germany.

On learning their removal, Alice wrote to her father, imploring him for forgiveness, but the stern old man replied that he never would see her from her room.

Shortly afterwards Richard Morgan, in order to avoid arrest for debt, left England and went to Germany, and as ill-luck would have it, took up his residence near the Howards.

The result of this arrangement, and the revelation that if Alice had married him, she would have had a large fortune, nearly

drove the embarrassed man frantic, and he swore to have revenge.

Before many weeks had passed the two eldest sons of Percy Howard mysteriously disappeared, and their corpses were subsequently found floating in a river near at hand.

The shock caused by this distressing occurrence killed Mrs. Howard.

The day after his wife was buried, Percy Howard sought Richard Morgan at his hotel, accused him of the crime, and struck him to the ground.

Being an expert with all kinds of weapons, and thirsting for Howard's blood, Morgan demanded satisfaction.

The next morning they met and fought with swords, and Morgan was wounded.

But the villain did not die, and Mr. Howard, hearing that he was recovering, and having time to reflect upon the helpless condition of Lucy and her little brother, returned to America to avoid difficulty, and went to the Far West.

Driven to the necessity of living by his wits, Morgan devoted his time to gambling, and soon became known as a sharper of the worst kind.

Finding that his reputation rendered it difficult for him to procure victims to fleece in Europe, he came to America.

Richard Morgan, alias Red Dick, sinking lower and lower in crime, very naturally drifted out West with the motley crew of gamblers and desperadoes who swarmed along the line of the railroad when it was being built.

By some strange fatality the band of train-wreckers, of which Red Dick, as we shall continue to call him, was the chief, took up their quarters at a place not many miles from Mr. Howard's house.

But it was not until Red Dick was on his way to assist in plundering the train wrecked at Medicine Bow River that he accidentally saw Mr. Howard at his house, and recognized him.

At the same time Red Dick saw Lucy Howard and her brother, and though he did not know them, readily guessed who they were.

Having been advised of the fortune left to Mrs. Howard's children by Sir Hector Arundel, Red Dick, who knew that he could not accomplish anything by fair means, immediately determined to kill Mr. Howard and his son, and carry off Lucy and marry her by force; then, with the proofs of his marriage, to go to England and secure the whole of the fortune.

And in this diabolical plan he would probably have succeeded if Rob and Larry had not interfered, as has already been related.

"Well," said Rob, as the conversation was being concluded, "Red Dick will not trouble you again, for without doubt his neck was broken when he fell off of the engine."

"I cannot feel sure he is dead until I see his body," replied Mr. Howard, "for I have a strong presentiment that he will turn up again."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### CONCLUSION.

Rob was rather disposed to laugh at Mr. Howard's idea that Red Dick would turn up again, but Mr. Fillmore, to whom he spoke about it, took a more serious view of the matter, and said:

"The rascal may not have been killed, after all; so suppose you fire up the Juno, hitch on a car, take a few men with you, and go and bring him back, dead or alive."

To this Rob of course assented, and as soon as steam could be made on the Juno, started off on his mission, accompanied by Larry and about a dozen volunteers.



But much to Rob's astonishment and chagrin, Red Dick could not be found, though the party discovered where a man had apparently fallen into a mud puddle by the roadside.

That afternoon Rob and Lucy Howard happened to be alone, and the latter said:

"I cannot accept money for doing my duty."

"Then what will you accept, if you won't have money?"

"I want you, for I love you better than my life."

Then—well, Rob did not exactly know how it happened himself, but the next moment he had his arm around Lucy, and was kissing her, while she, with her head on his shoulder, was laughing and crying at the same time.

"But what will your father say?" asked Rob, soon as he in some degree regained his self-possession.

"He will say as I think," replied the fair girl, "that a brave true heart is worth all the money in the world."

And she was right, for when they went to Mr. Howard and told him all, he kissed Lucy and shook Rob by the hand heartily, saying:

"You have won her bravely, and if I had the whole world to choose from, I could not find any one I would rather give her to."

It is useless to speak of Rob's feelings, so we will only say that Larry was so glad of his good fortune that he was almost able to hide his outward sign of his sorrow for the loss of his brother, which he knew would cloud his friend's happiness.

Ten days afterwards Mr. Howard was well enough to travel, and Mr. Fillmore not only placed a special train at the service of the party, but with a number of his own and of Rob's friends, determined to accompany them to Omaha.

The locomotive attached to the train was the Juno, and Rob under pretence of having a desire to run an engine over the road, but really to escape the jokes of the gay party, determined to act as engineer, with Larry as fireman.

Nothing unusual occurred until some thirty miles had been passed, when a wild, ragged-looking man sprang from behind a rock beside the road in a deep cut, and commenced to brandish his arms about.

The signal "Danger!" as all railroad men know, is given by any violent action on the track, such as moving the hands or contorting the body in a maniacal way calculated to attract attention.

Therefore Rob whistled "Put on brakes," cut off the steam, and reversed the Juno.

But such was the momentum of the train that it could not be stopped until it was within a few feet of the man.

Almost before the engine stopped the man clambered up on it, and said:

"Ther's murtherin' robbers waitin' at ther ind av ther cut, and they've put things on ther road."

"How do I know that I can trust you? I cannot see any obstruction on the track."

"It's around ther bend, but on my soul, it's there."

"An' on my soul it is, too. Whoop—hurrah!" yelled Larry, "it's Mike himself," and the next moment Larry was hurrying and crying over his brother, and for the moment was entirely oblivious of the danger which threatened.

Not so with Rob however. He immediately commenced to look the train over, rather, tried to do so, but the grade was so steep that the driving wheels of the locomotive slipped, and would not turn round the rails.

Just as it was about the lower of the hill, and before the train could be made to move backward a number of men on horseback, armed on the track in the lower end of the cut, and galloped toward the engine, yelling and brandishing pistols.

Rob saw that it was useless to attempt to escape the train-

wreckers by backing the engine, and in their leader, he recognized Red Dick.

"Back with you," he cried to Larry, "and uncouple the engine from the train."

Larry was all alive now, for the actual sight of danger recalled him to himself instantly; quick as a flash he sprang over the back of the tender, and did as he was bid.

Grinding his teeth together, Rob, with grim determination, threw the throttle-valve wide open, and charged the villains with the locomotive!

On seeing the locomotive, looking like a demon of destruction, come thundering down toward them, the train-wreckers uttered yells of terror, and tried to fly.

Too late—too late! Like a thunderbolt the locomotive dashed amid the despairing wretches, crushing, mangling and destroying.

It was over in less time than it takes to read it, and then all that were left alive of the train-wreckers were a few dismembered wretches, breathing their last in unutterable agony.

On running the engine back to the train, Rob found the horrified passengers engaged in looking at the bloody scene in the cut, and they warmly thanked him for saving them from robbery, and perhaps worse.

Among the slain was Red Dick, whose head had been completely severed from his body by the wheels of the engine.

Mike Dolan, after slipping away during the night from his Indian captors, had wandered about subsisting on roots and berries, until that day, when he was lucky enough to find his way back to the railroad, and while waiting in hopes of getting on a train, saw the train-wreckers obstructing the track, and gave warning of the danger, otherwise Red Dick would have captured the train, got possession of Lucy Howard, and no doubt have murdered Rob, Larry, and Mr. Howard.

But little remains to be told.

Rob and Larry accompanied Mr. Howard and Lucy to England.

On reaching London, Mr. Howard opened the mysterious iron box, took from it his marriage certificate, and the baptismal certificates of his children, and, armed with these proofs of Lucy's identity, had no trouble in securing her large fortune.

When Rob examined the box he found that it contained a cleverly-contrived alarm, intended to scare off anyone who tampered with the lock, and it was that which had frightened the express agent.

Rob and Lucy were married in London, and Larry was, as a matter of course, Rob's best man.

Then the whole party went to Ireland, and at Listowel, County Kerry, Larry, whom Lucy had insisted upon amply providing for, was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to "the girl he left behind him" when he first came to America.

An extended bridal tour through the most interesting places in Europe followed, after which Larry and Rob, with their wives and fortunes, returned to New York, where they have since resided, and continued to be the best and firmest of friends.

#### THE END.

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